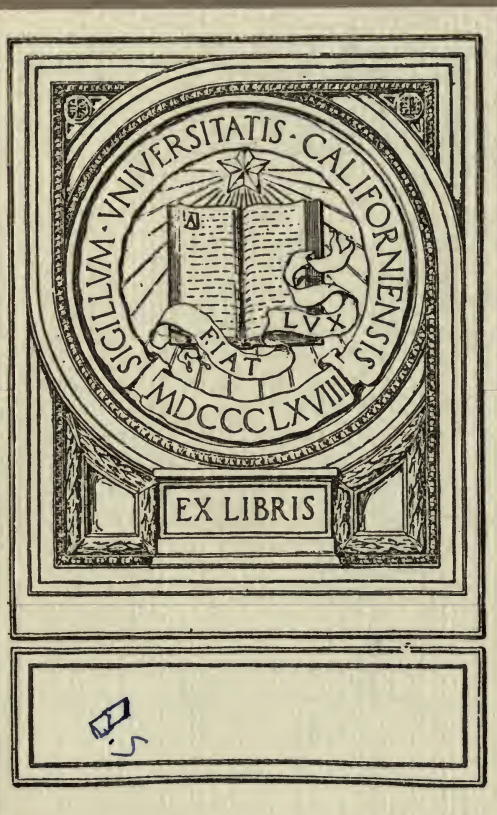


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THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF
RELIGIOUS BELIEF

BY

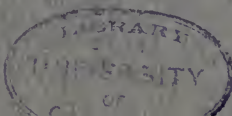
WILLIAM WILSON ELWANG, Ph. D.



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PART I

THE NATURE OF RELIGION

CHAPTER I

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF RELIGION

Religion, using that term in its broadest sense, is co-eval with man.

There may have been a time in the history of the race when, the elements which compose it not having condensed themselves into that specific consciousness which we now call religious, religion was something indistinguishable from man's other experiences. But as far back, certainly, as history traces him, the evidences of his religiosity abound on every hand. And where history fails for lack of material, anthropology supplies abundant proof (megalithic monuments, painted bones, etc.), that religious ideas occupied the human mind probably as early as the Mammoth Age and certainly in the later Stone Age.¹ And when anthropology, in its turn, has pushed its investigations as far back into the dim past as even its adventurous spirit can penetrate, the new psychology takes up the uncompleted task and boldly postulates religion as a native human equipment, a psychological necessity.²

Further, and in logical sequence, it is now the practically unanimous conclusion of anthropologists to the time-worn discussion whether there ever was a people utterly destitute of religious feelings and ideas, that religion has always been coex-

¹ Goblet D'Alviella, Hibbert Lectures, 1891, p. 15 seq.

² Colvin, American Journal of Psychology, 1902, pp. 80-87.

tensive with the race. It is true that such recent authorities as Darwin,¹ Lubbock,² and Spencer,³ cling to the old notion that such peoples had existed and had actually been found. But neither Lubbock nor Spencer, as is well known, speak with first-hand knowledge on this point, but depend for their facts entirely upon the reports of others, usually unscientific travelers and missionaries; and Darwin can safely be ignored as an incompetent witness in matters like these. It is, however, surprising to find so distinguished a contemporaneous anthropologist as M. Topinard asserting that "There are nations and tribes without religion and without any mode of worship, and *who believe only in wizards or fetich*. It is true they make every form of superstition to subserve their religiousness. But some African or Melanesian tribes have not even superstitions,"⁴ But M. Topinard does not, it will be observed, specifically name the supposedly superstitionless tribes to which he refers so confidently. It would, indeed, have been an impossible task. And as to those which, he claims, are without any religion at all, the clause of his statement which we have italicized sufficiently indicates his false point of view. His superstitions are the religion of the savage.

Certainly, if by religion is meant a highly developed metaphysical system, or an elaborately organized cult, then, it must be admitted, many peoples, past and present, have never had any religion at all. But if the definition be made as broad as it should be, to include the crude mesh of superstition in which the Australian Blackfellows struggle, as well as the most highly developed form of Christianity, it becomes at once evident that there never was an organized fragment of human society anywhere without

¹ Descent of Man, p. 93.

² Pre-Historic Times, p. 574.

³ Principles of Sociology, II. 672.

⁴ Anthropology, p. 152

a genuine religion. Wundt's¹ curt remark that the assertion that there are non-religious peoples has about as much weight as the speculations about a speechless race, is entirely justified by the facts. Tylor's conclusion, of a generation ago, that "as a matter of fact the tribes are not found"² may still be regarded as authoritatively closing the discussion. There are no atheistic peoples. Wherever man is, there also is religion. It is a common possession of the race.

And these conclusions, that religion is both coeval and coextensive with the race, are strengthened by a consideration of the obscure problem of religious origins, using the word origin not in the sense of a starting point in time, but as cause or ground. In other words, the enquiry at this point is not historical, but psychological. The temporal origin of religion is veiled in the thick darkness of the prehistoric ages. The genetic-causal ground of religion is, however, always open to investigation.

We may dismiss at once, as totally inadequate, any and all theories that profess to find the genesis of so universal and complex a state of consciousness as religion in this or that single phenomenon or psychological moment. Max Müller well says that "We might as well derive the ocean from one river as religion from one source."³ The real beginning of religion is to be found neither in animism alone, nor in ancestor worship, euhemerism, the perception of the infinite, the inter-action of man's fears and hopes, nor yet in any or all of these combined. These are merely the earliest now discoverable manifestations of that mystery of thought, or rather, not to clothe it in too intellectualist a garb, let us say that mystery of craving in primitive man which we call religious. Religious practices and ideas are never religion itself. They are the explicit of what was already implicit in man. They express his religious

¹ Ethik, p. 49.

² Primitive Culture, I. 418.

³ Anthropological Religion, p. 117.

consciousness, the common essence, the residuum that would remain when they, the diverse outward phenomena, have been abstracted. But whence that consciousness? And what is its foundation principle? Historically it is now impossible to get back of the differentiation into secular and sacred, religious and non-religious. Is it possible to do so psychologically? Only conjecturally. The modern savage, whom we usually depend upon in our efforts to reconstruct primitive man is not a primitive man at all, but represents a plane of development already considerably beyond the initial stage. If, however, with this understanding, we reason analogically, we can safely say that religion is a form of reaction which developed from very early primitive unspecialized types of experience neither temporary nor accidental. For example, one of the elements of religion, as we know it in its higher forms, is love. This, with its roots deep down in the mere biological conditions of propagation is already somewhat differentiated in the maternal instinct, when, undoubtedly, the first new stirrings arise in the individual which impel it to project itself beyond itself; it is further developed in the maternal feeling; it is specialized still more by the rise of family relationships; it is cultivated by a multitude of other human ties, being gradually linked to one idea after another, such as that of the state, when it comes to expression as patriotism, sometimes with great fervor and devotion; and it finds, at last, its highest and most independent differentiation in religion, in the love of and devotion to God.

The real source of religion is to be sought in the nature and laws of the human mind. Religion is the product of that mind as influenced and controlled by the cosmic process of which it is a part. Adaptably the human mind was always religious; the solicitation to be religious came from without, or, otherwise put, religion is the result of an organic tendency and an external stimulus. Primitive man's conflict with his environment, when

awful forces threatened to overwhelm him, was doubtless the leading factor in the development of his religion. His sense of helplessness, it may safely be assumed, drove him to religion. His sense of imperfection, perhaps, lent a coordinate incentive. But behind all these feelings more or less closely connected with his relations to his environment, as a still more comprehensive element in the analysis, and minus which the nature without the man could not have influenced him at all, was the nature within the man himself, the causative instinct that made him not only feel helpless and imperfect and dependent but enabled him, by way of compensation, to mediate between the crises that presented themselves to him by urging him to establish relations with powers, or a Power, superior to himself in order to a more secure and confident existence; in other words, to become religious. Beyond this we cannot go, at least in the present stage of our knowledge, even though M. Topinard, in his suggestive little volume on Science and Faith insists upon carrying the analysis a step further by labelling that causative instinct the cerebral need for exercise¹—a phrase which really means nothing at all. Until we shall know something definite about the origin of mind and can more adequately correlate it with its environment, we shall be unable to track the religious principle, instinct or intuition in man to its final source.

From the sociological point of view it is, for our purpose, an adequate explanation to look upon religion as an essential equipment of human nature, which is now almost as much a part of man's psychical nature as the instinct for food is a part of his physical nature. It is a special human psychical aptitude, just as sucking is a special muscular aptitude of the mammalia, and functioning, like the latter, for survival. Of course, in the ultimate analysis, it must be admitted its origin lay in a mere rudimentary consciousness of individual utility, in an effort to over-

¹ Chap. viii.

come the disparity between desire and satisfaction. That is to say, the original, even as the present, bond between the worshipper and the worshipped was a very practical one. But it would be a mistake to characterize it on that account as fundamentally selfish. No normal instinct, broadly speaking, is a selfish instinct, and human instincts are preeminently social in their nature. Because man as man never lived in isolation, but always in social relations, it may also be said that religion sprang into being as a means of group preservation during a more or less prolonged crisis in the very early history of the race, when the struggle between the self and the species was really fought out and the victory won by the latter and "the great Human Problem of establishing and maintaining a sufficient unity of being" was put once for all in the way of a happy solution. Through the interaction of individual and individual, and individual and group, there came into existence a social consciousness from which, in turn, was developed that ideal content which we now identify as religious. And because it touched and controlled those springs of action most closely connected with social self-preservation, it is certain that religion must have established itself very early in human history.¹ And once successfully established as a social co-ordination, it persisted, became a habit, and finally developed into an instinct which manifests itself in a variety of outward forms in the life of individuals and in the social process. Historically religion is the result of race experience. Psychologically it is man's sense of ultimate values.

This view does not, it may be added, necessarily warrant the conclusion that religion is not or cannot be based upon a transcendental principle, and that it must, therefore, be explained as an illusion. This phase of the subject belongs to the theologian and metaphysician. We permit ourselves only one remark; neither physical nor psychical things lose their validity by the discovery and presentation of their origin and growth.

¹ W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, defends the view that all primitive religion was essentially communal, p. 246. De Coulanges' views on this point are well known—cf. *The Ancient City*, throughout.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECT OF RELIGION

It would, perhaps, be well to define at the very outset, if possible, the thing which we propose to discuss. But we do not indulge the foolish hope of condensing religion once for all into a bit of a formula. The time is probably not yet come for such a final definition, either descriptive or logical; and verbal definitions are, after all, only of secondary importance. But it ought to be possible to frame at least a tentative one that will answer the immediate purpose of this thesis, in which we are concerned, not so much with the philosophy of religion, as with its social significance. The sole question before us, let it be borne in mind, is what functions does religion subserve in society, understanding by society a psychically interacting group of people?

But perhaps our tread will be firmer in the end if we first review, briefly, some past attempts of eminent philosophical, theological, anthropological, and, especially, sociological thinkers to precipitate, so to speak, into a few words what the human mind seems always to have held in solution. Of course here, as in all controversial fields, definitions are numerous, divergent, and contradictory. The phenomena are so voluminous and complex that they seem to baffle logical arrangement. Individual thinkers seem always to have appreciated clearly enough some particular aspect of religion, as their mental structure inclined them to sympathy either with the affectional, intellectual or ethical element revealed by it. Too often, also, controversial exigencies and dogmatic requirements have had a baneful effect upon these efforts, and every kind of liberty has been taken not only with the word religion itself but with its connotations. A definition that is at once comprehensive and intensive enough is, perhaps, still a desideratum.

Philosophy seeks to interpret religion speculatively. It insists upon an effort to find its ultimate basis, the meaning which lies behind its phenomena and gives it a final justification. That is to say, when philosophy deals with religion as a special field of human experience its problem is the purely ontological one, not the more practical ones of sociological interest, namely, how does religion perform its functions; how is it related to other human activities; and what is its social value? Hence philosophical, more especially strictly metaphysical definitions have little if any bearing upon this discussion. Hegel's, that religion is "*Beziehung des Geistes auf den absoluten Geist*,"¹ may serve as the classical example. It means, if it means anything, that religion is a conscious relation of the finite spirit of God as the Absolute Spirit. Such metaphysical definitions nearly always vitiate their interest for the sociologist by confounding religion with a department of a theory of the universe. Thus, for example, Ritschl deliberately identifies them. Religion, he affirms, "is primarily a means of solving the problem of the world, and of man's relation to it." Ratzel² and Peschel³ connect it with man's craving for causality. But, surely, the need of explaining the universe as an intelligible whole by a sufficient principle of reason is one thing, while the religious tendency is quite another thing. The heart of religion, as we find it exemplified in fetishism as well as in Christianity, is a more or less definite personal relation between the worshipper and the worshipped. What common content has such an attitude with a *Weltanschauung*, a reasoned theory of reality?

Theology, as practically understood, has shown itself, strangely enough, even less competent to supply a definition of religion sufficient for the sociologist. Theology begins with authoritative

¹ Fischer, *Hegels Leben, Werke und Lehre*, II. 959.

² *History of Mankind*, I. 41.

³ *The Races of Man*, p. 245.

presumptions. It necessarily assumes a god, nay, it assumes the God, and from that starting point proceeds to develop a system of doctrine. But doctrine, in the ordinary sense of that word, is a very late product in religious development. Custom, worship, and ritual always precede it. Belief that can be clearly defined and organized is the product of long, slow growth. To this the doctrines of Christianity are no exception. It is therefore not surprising that definitions of religion by theologians as well as by some philosophers and others, solely in terms of belief, are inadequate from our standpoint.

Thus, according to Martineau's oft-quoted definition, religion is a "belief in an Ever-living God, that is, a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding Moral relations with mankind."¹ It is evident that if religion necessarily involves a belief in so highly specialized an object as the God described by Martineau a vast majority of mankind always has been and still is non-religious. But this clear perception, which Hegel imperfectly shared, that religion involves a relationship of some kind between the Infinite and the finite, that it is a divine-human mutuality, is important. Such a relationship, more or less conscious, is absolutely indispensable to religion, differentiating it, indeed, from philosophy. In the highest known form of religion this consciousness becomes at last a conviction of kinship with the Divine: "Now are we the sons of God."

Among sociologists, Comte emphasized belief as of the essence of religion. He held that a belief in God was the chief, indeed, the only characteristic of the religion-heretofore practiced by mankind. His view of what religion ought to be, and positivism really is, was, as expounded by Caird,² "a harmony of existence, in which all its elements are fitly co-ordinated." This harmony is produced by the regulation of egoistic motives, the

Comte's
idea

¹ A Study of Religion, I. 1.

² The Social Philosophy of Comte, p. 25.

adaptation of men to each other, and their submission to and affection for a superior power.

Spencer, pure intellectualist that he was, and waging a constant warfare against all metaphysics, more especially the theological kind, is nevertheless constrained to define religion as an abstract belief in "the omnipresence of something which passes comprehension,"¹ a "something" which he afterwards identifies as Power. This places religion upon an intellectual basis. Holding, as he did most strenuously, that men are bound to the relative and conditioned, the rationale of the universe nevertheless drove him irresistibly to assume something beyond it. But, in thus admitting an ultimate intuitive metaphysical belief Spencer completely nullified his theory of dreams, doubles, and ghosts, upon which he lays so much stress in his theory of religious origins.

Lubbock, in his classification of the religions of the world, arranges them according to the kinds of beliefs that characterize them, and concludes that the conception of the deity is the most reliable test of religion.² Tylor's minimum definition is almost too well-known to be repeated; religion is a "belief in spiritual beings." This would seem to exhaust the analysis in this direction. But Lang³ argues, plausibly enough, that the idea of God may have existed without involving the idea of a spirit. "God may be prior in evolution to ghosts."³ Lang himself defines religion as "a belief in a primal being, a Maker."

To define religion merely as belief and to let it go at that, is to overlook both the necessity of a recognized relationship of some sort to the object believed in, without which there can be no religion at all, as well as the characteristic impulsive and emotional elements of religion.

¹First Principles, p. 13.

²Origin of Civilization, p. 209.

³Myth, Ritual and Religion, I. 310.

Recognizing this D'Alviella, though he still names belief as of the essence of religion, emphasizes the devotee's sense of relationship to his divinity. He understands by religion "the conception man forms of his relations with the superhuman and mysterious powers on which he believes himself to depend."¹ He thinks this definition "sharply defines the sphere of religious phenomena" and "indicates the common and essential character of all religious manifestations." Elsewhere he defines religion as "the belief in the existence of super-human beings who interfere in a mysterious fashion in the destiny of men."

Professor Simmel still more thoroughly combines these two aspects. He emphasizes belief in God as the very substance of religion but insists that, in order to be religious, such a belief must not only mean the intellectual acceptance of God's existence, but must imply also "a certain subjective relation to him, a going out of the affections to him, an attitude of life;" Religion, therefore, "is a peculiar mixture of faith as a kind of method of knowledge with practical impulses and feelings."²

Sometimes religion is confounded with ethics. This is due perhaps to the fact that while it is possible to conceive of religion as wholly apart from ethics, and while there have been religions which did not foster morality, or even were hostile to it, at least as we now understand it, the assertion holds that religion always affects life, practical life, in that it guides and controls man's relations to his fellows. Ethics lies in the germ in even so low a religion as that of the Australian Blackfellows, and in the highest known forms it actually seems to merge at last into it—the moral and religious sentiments coalesce. It is not surprising, therefore, that some eminent thinkers have been led to postu-

¹ Hibbert Lectures, 1891, p. 47.

² A contribution to the Sociology of Religion, American Journal of Sociology, Nov. 1905, p. 366.

late the identity of the two. Leibnitz belongs here. According to Falckenberg,¹ he held that "Enlightenment and virtue are the essential constituents of religion." "Probity and piety are the same." But the classic example here, of course, is Kant. And this is just what we would be led to expect from the earnest and austere sage of Königsberg, remembering his strenuous, if not always successful efforts all along the line to guide our human reason out of the barren wastes of metaphysics. We are not surprised, therefore, to find him defining religion as "das Erkenntniss aller unserer Pflichten als göttlicher Gebote,"² thus reducing it, to all intents and purposes, to a mere schedule of moral maxims, and necessarily excluding even worship from its sphere. Such a definition inevitably suggests a number of difficulties. Whence this knowledge? which, by the way, is a mere exchange of terms for belief. Theoretically a "categorical imperative" may be a sufficient answer, but practically we all know that such a severe and abstract view of duty, though possibly a spring of action for a select temperament here and there, has never been a sufficiently strong incentive for the many. Men may know a duty and even recognize it as a divine command, yet no form of action or conduct will result from such knowledge. Nothing is truer than that knowledge of the good does not necessarily imply inclination or power to attain it. In other words, must not feeling prompt obedience to the commands and will execute them? And it is precisely for the proper adjustment of man's will to his moral sense that religion is needed.

According to Professor Morris Jastrow,³ man's moral sense determines his religious beliefs, and not vice versa. Primitive man, he asserts, must have had ethical qualities before he thought of ascribing them to his gods. But Professor Jastrow

¹ History of Modern Philosophy, p. 287.

² Sämmtliche Werke, VI. 252.

³ The Study of Religion, p. 204 seq.

does not define those primitive ethical qualities. Was the feeling of obligation, no matter how indistinct, one of them? Then would it not be just as true to say that primitive man must have had gods before he had gods? But, once the bond between religion and ethics has been established, religion stimulates the ethical sense, and men become merciful, just and truthful, no longer through mere expediency, but to secure the goodwill of the superior powers. This is, of course, indisputably true, but Professor Jastrow's method of reaching this conclusion reveals a curious confusion of thought. He holds that the most primitive men were inclined to be merciful, just and truthful, because it was expedient, either for them individually or for their group life, because the life-process demanded such behavior, but that later "more urgent considerations" often set aside such an impulse, and a more efficacious one was then superstitiously invented, and men acted mercifully, justly and truthfully for the sake of their gods. And this process Professor Jastrow calls "stimulating the ethical sense." To one who has no theory to defend it looks much more like an expansion of the religious sentiment at the expense of the ethical. At first men were merciful et cetera, simply because it was expedient. That is certainly natural ethics, pure and simple. Then later, after men had fashioned their gods, they acted mercifully et cetera, because it pleased those gods to have them do so. But that is surely a purely religious motive. And it is the growth of this motive, the very efflorescence of the religious sentiment, which is described as a stimulation of the ethical sense. Professor Jastrow does not accurately distinguish between religion and morality. The former always bows to an authority extraneous to man's will, the latter is a feeling of worth relative to a changing social ideal.

He rightly goes on to say that it is doubtful whether morality would ever have amounted to much without religion. "Such a system," he affirms, "would have lacked certain qualities which mankind could ill afford to spare." That is to say, while what

is recognized as natural morality, with its basis in instinct and developed by natural selection, is undoubtedly one of the pillars of the primitive social structure, it never was and never could be the main support, what the Germans would call Träger, of organized society as it exists among mankind. Natural moral motives will not, at least for any length of time, provide the order which society requires for its wholesome development. "The theory that the moral instincts beget control has a distressing lack of finality." Why? Because these instincts do not and cannot supply a sufficient basis for unconditional authority.¹ Moral sanctions must have a transcendental basis. Morality stands or falls with God. Consequently natural ethics, in spite of itself, is continually inventing something to take the place of the religious sanctions which it would have us discard.

Turning to history for a determination of the relation between ethics and religion, we find that there are no instances of the existence of either of these factors without the other. So far as historical materials and contemporaneous testimony are available, religion and morality are co-existent and co-operative, the twin offsprings of a primitive undifferentiated unity. And, logically, morality is, of course, implied in religion. Theoretically, the one can always be separated from the other, but practically they are always co-related in life, at least to some extent. It is impossible to distinguish the ethical from the religious in the early expressions of childhood.² For scientific analysis the moral consciousness may be separated from the totality of consciousness, but it cannot be comprehended even then unless its environment, and certain other and higher elements, are taken into consideration. Morality and religion are two aspects or activities of one developing life. They are sociologically and psychologically closely interdependent.

¹ Cf. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, p. 112, note.

² Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations*, p. 328.

We turn next to a class of thinkers and investigators who have approached the subject from still another visual angle, the psychologists, whose efforts have been, in the main, to put religion, even in its doctrinal development, upon a purely emotional basis. It is nothing, it is claimed, but an affective element, such as dependence, fear, hope. Schleiermacher was probably the first writer of eminence to turn attention in this direction. In his famous *Christliche Glaubenslehre* he expounded the view that religion was "neither knowing nor doing, but an inclination and determination of our sentiments, which manifests itself in an absolute feeling of dependence on God." Wundt defines it as all representations and feelings which relate to an ideal state.¹ Both of these writers, and they are representative, err in viewing religion from a purely individualistic standpoint, thereby leaving no room whatever for its important social aspect. According to Schleiermacher religion seems to exist simply because the individual needs it. According to Wundt it exists because it satisfies the self. In other words, the subjectivism in religion is so exaggerated that it cannot but lead to an extreme individualism and an inevitable lack of interest in social affairs. It is the old theological idea of "personal salvation" in a new and less attractive garb. It may be added, also, that this view yields all too readily to the conclusion that religion may be, after all, a species of hallucination. That is to say, such a purely subjective religion is too easily bleached out by adverse experience in life, or is too readily driven out by hostile criticism. If the philosopher and theologian have erred by too great an emphasis upon the intellectual element, the psychologist is no less in error when he assigns such a preponderating or unique place to the emotions in religion. The feelings are, certainly, a very large factor in the religious consciousness, especially in savages, but they do not exhaust its content. It is the assumption that they do which vitiates the Ritschlian theology,

¹ *Ethik*, p. 48.

and the new Parisian school's extension of it. Sabatier's message, delivered with all the grace and style peculiar to a true Frenchman, is "salvation by faith independent of beliefs," because "the essence of religion lies in the sentiment or movement of the soul laying hold of God," to which it is impelled by "the feeling of dependence which every man experiences with respect to universal being."¹ Baldwin, it may be added, defines religion as "*emotion kindled by faith*,"² a definition which itself needs to be defined, for he immediately adds, "emotion being reverence for a Person and faith being dependence upon him." This seems to imply that the intellectual element of cognition of the Person revered is not properly a part of religion at all, which begins only with reverence for and dependence upon him.

Max Müller is perhaps best placed in a class by himself. He sees in religion "a mental faculty which, * * * enables man to apprehend the infinite."³ This "faculty" he describes as a power independent of sense and reason, even to some extent contradicted by sense and reason, but a very real power. Now aside from the doubt cast upon this definition as soon as we try to reconcile systems like totemism and fetichism with an apprehension of the Infinite, it is, certainly, nothing short of heroic to attempt, in these days, to try to solve the entire problem by returning to a discarded psychology and postulating a distinct religious faculty; though it is only fair to add that with Müller a "faculty" signifies merely "a mode of action."

Kidd's definition is, in its way, as unique as Müller's. It runs as follows:

"A religion is a form of belief, providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antag-

¹ Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion, p. 22.

² Social and Ethical Interpretations, p. 357.

³ Origin of Religion, p. 21.

*onistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing."*¹

Though this elaborate definition is expressly of religion as a social phenomenon only, it does not appear to be adequate even in this restricted sense. According to this definition religion is of value, both to the individual and society, only in connection with "that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic." For some individuals, then, those of a specially self-centred or contrary stripe, it is conceivable that religion would be needed in well-nigh all the concerns of life; for others it would apply only at certain points of their contact with society, or at certain intervals; while for others, again, it would not be needed at all, simply because they are never conscious of this antagonism between their individual interests and the larger interests of society; and it is further conceivable that a time might come in the evolution of things when, the final vestiges of antagonism between the individual and society having been eliminated altogether, religion would necessarily disappear because it would no longer be needed, because its chief and only social function as peacemaker would no longer apply. But this is precisely the possibility which Kidd will not admit. On the contrary, religious beliefs "so far from being threatened with eventual dissolution they are apparently destined to continue to grow with the growth and to develop with the development of society."² Why? Because "the most profoundly individualistic, anti-social, and anti-evolutionary of all human qualities is one which, other things being equal, tends to be progressively developed in the race, namely, reason."³ According to Kidd the antagonism between religion and reason is therefore forever irreconcilable.

¹ Kidd, *Social Evolution*, p. 111.

² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF RELIGION

We have now passed in brief review some of the most characteristic definitions of religion. We have pointed out what we conceive to be their shortcomings, and sought to recognize the truth in each, growing, for the most part, out of the dogmatic and speculative methods. None of them seems to be sufficiently extensive, certainly not from the standpoint of the sociologist. But we are not yet ready for the formulation of our own conception of what religion is. We must first pass to a consideration of the function of religion in human society as others have conceived that function. From what we know of the universality and prominence of the religious attitude among mankind it may be supposed to play an important and useful part in the development of society. What end then does religion conserve?

As before, we will first hear what others have said on this point, only in this instance, confining ourselves entirely to the views of anthropological and sociological writers as alone of interest for the purposes of this discussion.

To this class belongs, first of all, Auguste Comte, *clarum et venerabile nomen*, that of the pioneer of modern sociological science.

In attempting to describe and set a value upon Comte's theory of religion we must keep in mind that, like all other pathfinders in the wide wilderness of thought, he was distinctly the child of his age. He was typically French. His theories were largely the condensed *Zeitgeist* of post-revolutionary France. He wrote at a time when the inevitable reaction against the extreme theories that had given France the guillotine, theories represented by Rousseau, had already made itself felt. For Rousseau the individual was everything, society nothing. For Comte society was everything

and the individual nothing. He saw clearly that individualism spelled anarchy, and meant the dissolution of society, and that, if there was to be civilization, its primal requisite must continue to be a true social sympathy. The development of this sympathy he sketched with characteristic one-sidedness in the *Philosophie Positive* by the application of the "law" of the three stages, which, of course, is no law at all, but merely an extremely schematic presentation of historical facts.

The first promptings of this sympathy, he claims, were made manifest in the theological form, as fetichism. But, since all theology was really built upon negations instead of positive truths, since it merely set up a god whom men ought to obey but could and did disobey, it could not permanently maintain the social order and gradually passed away¹. Nevertheless, in its time and way, it performed a "high social office." Its chief function was the primary step in the organization of society, the restraint of "individual eccentricity." It also provided for the "permanent existence of a speculative class."² But its "powerlessness for future service" is apparent.³

But the decay of theology, with its convenient supernatural volition as the sole type of causation, left a void in human thought which had to be filled. In due time, therefore, it was succeeded by another system, a weapon of attack, it is true, upon the old, a distinct step in advance, but of "much less intense social power,"⁴ and in the end equally impotent, the metaphysical philosophy, which merely put substantialized abstractions with no positive validity in the place of the older theological God. This abstract metaphysics, in its turn, necessarily gave way, in a developing society, to the last, the permanent system in the threefold series of prog-

¹ The Positive Philosophy, Martineau's trans., pp. 431, 435.

² Ibid., p. 528.

³ Ibid., p. 402.

⁴ Ibid., p. 533.

ress, the system which Comte himself inaugurated, but whose rudiments existed from the beginning,¹ and which will henceforth conduct man's improvement along entirely different lines of thought. Theological and metaphysical interpretations of the universe and man are renounced in this stage, and experience alone, directed by science, is relied upon as amply sufficient to lead man to the highest possible good. That is to say, man himself, without the intervention of any supernatural order of things, can work out his own salvation.²

Now how, according to Comte, is this to be done? The answer, in the light of Comte's fundamental conception that the law of human progress is an intellectual one, is interesting and instructive. Man's progress is to be brought about in the future, as in the past, by means of religion, which, rightly understood, is a sense that man is in the hands of a superior power. Comte freely admits that, in the past, religion, as a belief in God, provisionally directed the evolution of mankind. But this God was only a kind of vice-regent until the revelation of the real God, the "Grande Être," made him unnecessary and demanded his dethronement. When this revelation shall finally have taken place everywhere religion will have reached its fullest development and achieved its highest ends, the subjection of individual caprice and passion to social reason and law, and the subordination of personal instincts to the satisfaction of social tendencies. All this will be accomplished by harmonizing and placing in their proper organic relations to each other the will, the intelligence, and the heart, and consequently their corresponding forms or instruments of social salvation, the family, the state and the church. It will be the business of the latter, through its priesthood, to "modify the wills, without ever commanding the acts of men," in order to preserve the solidarity of mankind against the selfish interests of individ-

¹ Ibid., p. 531.

² Ibid., p. 431.

uals and groups. The church will represent the continuity of the life of humanity in the past and future, as against the claims of the hour. Her duty will be to make and keep men conscious of the fact that their activities are social functions, to keep them reminded that they must so live that they will add to the good which subsequent generations will enjoy. A religious life, according to - Positivism, means so to act that an ever richer and more harmonious social existence will be realized by future generations, and complete satisfaction to man's many-sized nature be secured.

For our purpose it is not necessary to continue the exposition of the system beyond this point.

Now, the significant thing for us to note, is the place assigned by Comte to the religious factor in his scheme of the development of social life and activity. With all his bias, he generously accords to the superstitions of the past a large part in the good work of progress. He recognizes clearly that religious belief, infinitely varied in form but unique in essence, has been the very main-spring of human life. Indeed, is not the great law of social dynamics traced in history by a succession of religious forms? In harmony with the imminent teleological principle which controls the Comtist philosophy, fetichism and polytheism were both socially useful. The former is said, however, to have been but a "feeble instrument of civilization," even though, "as to its social influence" "it effected great things for the race," being concerned in the institution of property and the permanent use of clothing, thus stimulating both industry and morality. Polytheism, by developing priesthoods, always relatively leisure classes, stimulated the study of science, art, and industry. Its efficiency is above all conspicuous in relation to the promotion of personal and social morality. The wholesome social effects of Catholicism, especially during the Middle Ages, are acknowledged and often almost fulsomely praised. "But its provisional nature is evident from the fact that the developments which it encouraged were the first

causes of its decay." Its chief use was to prepare the social elements for the positive regime.¹

✓ Man must, and therefore always does worship something. The calamitous mistake of the past has been to try to find an unknown and unknowable God, though even so the effect has been to some extent wholesome. Cosmical and physical laws cannot be worshipped. Hence the reasonableness, yes, the necessity, for the worship of Humanity, the Grande Être of whose existence and activity there can be no doubt. But what does this very phrase "Grande Être" imply? Is it not a metaphysical conception, a hypostatized Humanity? In a somewhat new and rather fantastic garb it is simply the old idea of the "absolute." Comte very clearly recognized that there was no inspiration to be got from mankind in the mass, but only, if at all, from its noblest and best representatives. Hence his *Politique Positive*, with what Huxley described as its "Catholicism without Christianity"; its interesting calendar of saints; its celebration of the memory of mankind's benefactors; and its vapid immortality in others. So complete, indeed, becomes the approximation to Catholicism that life is said to be a period of probation at the close of which reward or punishment is meted out according to desert.² Thus was Comte driven by the inevitable development of his own thought, to the conclusion that without some kind of religion mankind cannot enjoy its fullest possible life. Without at all intending it at the beginning the end of his system is the inevitable religious synthesis, subjective and relative, if you please, but religious nevertheless. So complete, indeed, is the synthesis that it supplies an "ecclesiastical institution" as thoroughly organized as that of Rome, with Comte himself as the high priest thereof! It required but a very brief extension of his thought to land him in the very place from which he so laboriously strove to dislodge philosophy

¹ Ibid., p. 402.

² Lévy-Bruhl, *The Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, p. 339.

and religion. As a matter of fact, after all Comte's efforts, the sum total of his achievements in this direction was to substitute the Grand Être in the place of God. His latest ambition, as he himself tells us, was to render "to his race the services of a St. Paul." The logicity of the reasoning which led him around such a circle need not concern us. Its significance lies in the fact that, unlike his predecessors of the Enlightenment, he saw distinctly and was courageous enough to affirm that negations are not enough, that a positive force is needed, and that in his search for it he reproduced, under another name and in a new dress, the great principle which he first felt himself so vehemently impelled to attack. To quote a distinguished exponent of Comtism: "the definitive unity of the individual will be reached through devotion to this true Great Being, whose existence and attributes no scepticism can dispute, and whose constant benefits, when rightly appreciated, must excite gratitude and love. Religion, appealing to and fortifying the altruistic principles in our nature, calls upon us to suppress every internal movement and abstain from every act which is opposed to the maintenance and development of the life of Humanity, and to cultivate all the tendencies that promote Her well-being and further Her work."¹ Comte himself, in so many words, restricted the function of religion to conservation, during the theological and metaphysical periods, and as plainly extended it during the positive. This his disciple recognizes and therefore, like his master, places man finally under the domain of the heart. In the last analysis the religion of positivism rests upon an emotional principle.²

Let us turn next to consider the views of a thinker whose influence, though already perceptibly waning, gave a powerful impetus to sociological investigations a generation ago. We refer to Herbert Spencer, the second great name in sociology.

¹ Ingram, *Human Nature and Morals*, p. 53.

² Cf. Lévy-Bruhl, *The Philosophy of Comte*, p. 333.

According to the First Principles, the vital element of all religion has, from the very first, been its recognition of that supreme verity, the "deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts—that the Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable."¹ Religion, in fact, is an "indefinite consciousness of existence transcending relations." This consciousness "is a constituent in man's nature," and is "as normal as any other faculty."² It must, therefore, be in some way conducive to human welfare. Now, one may, perhaps, wonder what an "indefinite consciousness" of an "utterly inscrutable" Power really is; and one may, perhaps, be inclined to be somewhat sceptical about the usefulness of a thing to which none of the categories of thought can apply; and one might, further, be pardoned for denying point-blank that a pure negation can be even as much as an "indefinite consciousness." How can Spencer, taking him on his own ground of the inscrutability of the subject matter of religion, affirm that the ultimate is ultimate, or absolute, or will always remain inscrutable? But this is a metaphysical fog-bank quite characteristic of the philosophy of the unknown. If Spencer has seen fit to reduce religion to an nth thing of mystery, a "ghost" sure enough, and yet attributes to it certain very definite and concrete functions, the logic is his concern, not ours. The significance of his reasoning lies in the fact that, like Comte, he felt himself compelled, even at the cost of highly prized consistency, to put more into the effect than he was willing to acknowledge in the cause.

What, according to Spencer, are the functions of religion? He begins his discussion of Ecclesiastical Institutions, which are, of course, religion expressed in so many forms, with the declaration that "There can be no true conception of a structure without a true conception of its function. To understand how an organization originated and developed, it is requisite to understand the

¹ First Principles, pp. 46, 102.

² Ibid., pp. 15, 16.

need subserved at the outset and afterwards."¹ This is evidently too broad a generalization. It is not always true that knowledge of the remote needs of an organism will give us the clue to the fully developed product. However, after this statement one naturally expects to find in what follows an explanation of the need subserved by so universal and important a structure as the ecclesiastical. What is our surprise, therefore, to be treated once more to the familiar Spencerian religious origins, beginning with an attempted refutation of the theory that religion is innate—✓ and here Spencer apparently forgot his assertion in the *First Principles* that the religious sentiment is a "constituent of man's nature"—leading step by step through the development of church government up to its highest form in Europe, including by the way a demolition of the particular Hebrew and Christian religions. But what about the need for this elaborate and persisting institution? How does it function in society? Surely from the amount of space devoted to it in Spencer's pages it is a most determinative factor in man's existence. If Spencer's formal answer is to be accepted as a complete and conclusive summary of what religion does for society the cosmic mountain has labored and brought forth a mouse. It is not too much to assert that the result has been absolutely trivial.

First, according to Spencer, religion is, or rather was, a social bond.² Its beliefs and rites once served to keep alive the thoughts and feelings appropriate to family relationships, by causing periodic assemblies for sacrifice, by repressing dissensions, and by producing conformity to the same injunctions. Faint survivals of this function, such as reverence for the known or supposed wishes of the dead, can still be traced among us. ✓ And all this is also true of clans, tribes and nations.

Secondly, religion is conservative. It offers "extreme re-

¹ *Principles of Sociology*, II. 671.

² *Ibid.*, III. vi. ix; 3d Ed.

sistance to change,"¹ both of usage and belief. Thus, more than all other agencies, religion conduces to cohesion, not only between the co-existing parts of a nation, but also between its present generation and its dead and gone generations. It represents the continuity of the social organism.

And these two functions of religion, as a social bond and a conservator, "may be expected to continue," though under a changed form. Why? Because the need of a social bond and conservative will continue? Not at all. But because the ultimate form of the religious consciousness is the final development of a consciousness which at the outset contained a germ of truth. What truth? "The one absolute certainty that man is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." In other words, the need for which religion will function in the future will not be the one for which it functioned in the past. The former was a social, the latter will be a metaphysical need. But the need for religion, no matter what its basis, will abide.

Now, in view of Spencer's well known antagonistic attitude toward religion as he understood it, and religions as he saw them prevalent around him, and bearing in mind the very limited whole-some functions, outlined above, which he was formally willing to attribute to this factor in man's developing life, it is highly interesting to reflect that in his *Principles of Sociology* he devotes not less than six hundred pages directly to the origin and influence of religious ideas and their resulting institutions, and throughout the work seems to take special delight in tracing one social development after another to a factor of progress with which he himself would have no concern and whose manifestations he regarded as so many foolish superstitions. The inconsistency is striking. So far as we know, Spencer never committed himself in so many words to Ward's preposterous conclusion that

¹ Ibid., p. 103.

there is something in the very nature of things that first compels a man to be a fool before he can become wise, but the logic of his position in this instance assuredly amounts to this absurdity. The religious instinct, or whatever else one may be pleased to call it, the very fountain head of man's thoughts and actions, the accoucheur at every social new birth, has been from the beginning and through the ages only a stupendous illusion with but a single grain of truth, and that a negation! It is impossible!

But Spencer has done excellent service, though he did not seem to recognize the import of his labors, in so painstakingly tracing back one great social institution after another to its source in man's religious nature, and it is, therefore, passing strange that he did not get a firmer grasp of the functional value of this feature of our human equipment. To quote Kidd's apt characterization of this feature of his work: "As we follow Mr. Spencer through the successive stages of his theory of social development, we see how he conceives human progress to be controlled in all its features by one fact, namely, the relation of the past to the present in a struggle in which the interests in the present are becoming the ascendant factor in our social evolution."¹ Social control in all its phases, according to Spencer, either originated in or still continues to be a government by the "dead hand" from the past, and this is essentially a religious conception.

That Spencer's attitude toward religion as a social force became much more sympathetic toward the close of his long life is indicated by the character of some of his 'reflections' in the closing chapter of his autobiography. In a passage which, to my mind at least, says much more than the cold words convey on casual reading, he admits that the mass of evidence which he himself collected forced him, virtually against his will, to the belief "that the control exercised over men's conduct by theological beliefs and priestly agency, has been indispensable." "So conspic-

¹ Principles of Western Civilization, p. 86.

uous are the proofs that among unallied races in different parts of the globe, progress in civilization has gone along with development of a religious system * * * that there seems no escape from the inference that the maintenance of social subordination has peremptorily required the aid of some such agency."¹

One cannot but regret that this conviction did not come to maturity earlier in Spencer's career. What an advocate of the wholesome social functioning of religious belief he would have made!

We come next to L. F. Ward's theory, held in solution throughout his voluminous but always interesting writings, elaborated in his *Dynamic Sociology*, and considerably modified, if not entirely negated, in an article published ten years later in *The International Journal of Ethics* for 1898. Ward, however, is such a wayward thinker that it is somewhat difficult to describe his theory with accuracy. According to Barth² he belongs to the dualistic school of biological sociology, though he himself claims that his standpoint is the "strictly monistic or genetic one."³

Feeling, the primordial element of mind, is a means to function. That is, it is a provision for the preservation and extension of life. "Nothing" says Ward, "can be genetically created that does not assist in the performance" of that function. But now, let the reader note, as structure developed, feeling was intensified and became an end in itself, for the individual; a condition of things which led to increased waywardness and violation of cosmical law. The reader is asked to recall just here that Ward has unqualifiedly affirmed that nothing can come to pass that does not tend to perpetuate life. Now he affirms, equally as unreservedly, that feeling, at first feeble, "suddenly shot up into enormous importance" and perversely pursued ends that were opposed to

¹ Autobiography, II. 545.

² *Die Philosophie der Geschichte als Sociologie*, p. 167.

³ *Dynamic Sociology*, I. 65.

the ends of nature. In fact, feeling "was unintended" in nature's plan, a wayward element, a perpetual menace to the organic experiment. The reader may be pardoned for a feeling of bewilderment. Ward himself confesses that "this aspect is wholly novel." And so it is.

Feeling, or the whole psychic and moral world in the germ, we are to conceive, then, as playing havoc with Dame Nature's plans. It must, therefore, be curbed. Consequently there came to pass another "device of nature to make the organism desire to perform acts that subserve function, but which would not otherwise be desired." That device was instinct. Feeling acts illogically from the standpoint of nature. It now turns out that instinct acts illogically from the standpoint of the individual. It is not surprising that this device, in its turn, proved inadequate, and the perceptive faculty had to be added as a further safeguard against the multiplying mistakes of the cosmic process. But, alas, this was only another mistake. Intellect only made it easier to secure the satisfaction of desire, and the imminent prospect was that the whole race of sentient beings would quickly come to nought. So, "fortunately, this very perceptive faculty which was being so freely employed in the interests of feeling regardless of function" itself came to the rescue. How? "Along with the individual mind working thus for the individual's end—there was also working, broadly, deeply, and sub-consciously, what may be properly called a collective or social mind—authoritatively inhibiting all race destroying actions." This social mind then invented—the term is not too strong, for Ward says expressly that religion "is a product of intellectual effort, and therefore artificial," as if it were something unnatural—an entirely new device for race preservation, which, for want of a better name, Ward is willing to call religion, or the belief in spiritual beings, for he accepts Tylor's definition. That is to say, man came to recognize the folly of race suicide and took means to check it before it was too late. In the beginning, as we have seen, intelligence was

riotous and dangerous. In the end it invented religion to tame itself. But one of the unwritten paragraphs of Ward's view of the origin of religion is concerned with the how of this interesting process. He gives us, indeed, a passing glimpse of it when he tells us, seemingly in all seriousness, that "in the nature of things a rational being must * * * be led into the most vital errors, for which he must further be deceived into cherishing the most intense regard," before he can reach the truth.

Ward himself seems to have misgivings about this all too easy and certainly sketchy theory. A little further along in his article on *The Essential Nature of Religion* he is led to search for and actually finds still another "foundation upon which all religion is built," namely, man's "sense of helplessness before the majesty of the environment." The race was in danger from unknown and uncontrollable agencies, and the perceptive faculty perceived this and sought to explain those agencies. In this instance, evidently, religion is traced back to the activity of the perceptive faculty, in the other it is carried back to the emotions, to a "sense," a feeling of helplessness, or dependence.

However, let us overlook this contradiction, and enquire of Ward what religion, on either supposition as to its origin, does for mankind. Here also we are met with two mutually inhibitive answers. In the *Dynamic Sociology*, his *chef d'oeuvre*, Ward insists that religion's "essentially erroneous character" makes beneficial results antecedently doubtful. As a wholesome social factor it is in all respects a failure. In a word, it is an anti-progressive and harmful influence which has "demonstrably impeded his [man's] upward course throughout his entire career."¹ In the magazine article referred to, in which Ward defends the thesis that religion "is a substitute in the rational world for instinct in the sub-rational," he demonstrates that it restrains unsafe activity, curbs the individualistic will, and stands for function

¹ *Dynamic Sociology*, II. 287.

against feeling. Ward's thought, it will be seen, has had a wholesome development. His earlier distinctly antagonistic views of religion have given way to a more appreciative theory and one much more consonant with the facts.

Again. Feeling is essentially an unsafe thing in the economy of nature and must be checked. Nevertheless, strange as it may seem, "all forms of progress are so many victories of feeling over function." Progress, which is necessarily a good effect, comes, then, from a bad cause. Further, as a restraint, a conservative force, "it is in the nature of religion to resist" the feelings, that is, to resist progress. If religion had its way, the race would be static. Let the reader reconcile this, if he can, with the further statement that "it belongs to the true nature of religion constantly to yield to the demands of reason and feeling." Ward attempts to resolve the difficulty by explaining that religion's opposition to feeling is not based on any hostility to pleasure per se, for pleasure is not bad, "but to the acts it produces." "Selfish greed is execrable, but the fruits of honest toil are noble." It would seem that Ward will not allow religion to discriminate between the pleasures of greed and the pleasures of honest toil. If that be so it results that religion does not function at all as a restraint of feeling, but as a kind of touchstone of its good and evil effects. How it does it is left to our imagination.

Ward's fundamental proposition is that religion is a substitute in the rational world for instinct in the sub-rational. That is to say, it functions for man as instinct functions for the sub-human species. Now, according to Ward himself, in his own words, "instincts were developed under the law of advantage or the survival of the fittest"—which means, if it means anything at all, that survival, on broad lines of species, of course, implied variation, variation in the direction of progress. Ward sees, therefore, that "instinct is positive and constructive." Query: why then does he insist upon limiting the religious instinct to negation and restriction? Instincts are positive and construc-

tive, but the religious instinct, he insists, has in "no direction advanced the temporal interests of mankind." In what sense then, can it be regarded as a substitute in man for instinct in the brutes? Only in the very limited sense that it inhibits men from doing certain things. Ward evidently had glimpses of the truth here, but for some occult reason refused to follow it into the clear light.

Kidd's view, exhaustively presented in his *Social Evolution*, is in some respects closely akin to Ward's. He professes to abandon but practically follows that writer's emphasis and dependence upon the biological method, with its forced and unnatural particularizations, as well as generalizations, and claims to content himself with seeing "some analogy between social life and organic life in general," but still thinks that "social systems seem to be endowed with a definite principle of life." What is that principle? In other words, what is it that mediates between the individual and the social order? Is it reason? No, because the conditions of existence, says Kidd, can have no rational sanction for most of the individuals comprising society. Then what is it? It is something above reason, religion. And it is here that Kidd's view coincides with Ward's later position, for Kidd's fundamental proposition is that religion functions solely as an "ultra-rational sanction for social conduct in the individual." From the standpoint of the individual, he claims, religion is as much an irrational thing as the blind evolutionary processes would have been, if they could have thought about it, to the large proportion of every species which had to be sacrificed for the good of the comparatively few who became fit to survive. Socialization, functioned by religion, is, then, a tremendous paradox, the sane effect of an insane cause. Man, Kidd seems to hold, having once acquired reason, insisted on using it to outwit the cosmic process of which he is a part, and has managed to go forward while stubbornly trying to go backward only by having his reason coerced or hoodwinked by religion. Kidd will not allow that

intelligence has had anything to do with race development. The question naturally arises, what is it good for? On his premises even the intellectual construction of the religious ideal is an impossibility. He does not, therefore, attempt to explain the inevitable rise of religious doctrines, the rational formulation of religious sentiment. That the race has made any progress at all under such conditions is truly remarkable. Is it, from the standpoint of the evolutionist, possible for the cosmic process to generate a principle, so potent and universal as human reason, which is so essentially hostile to the high trend of that process that it could conceivably, according to Kidd, nullify the aims of that process? Can the cosmic process commit suicide? Ward would probably say, No. Kidd says, Yes! Is it, psychologically speaking, possible to have an irrational sanction for rational conduct? Are men religious against their better judgment? Do they believe in God because it is a reasonable or an unreasonable thing to do? As a matter of fact, do not men believe in God, in any kind of a god, because to do so is more rational than not to do so? Is not intelligence, reason, always a concomitant of religion, it matters not how meagre it is? Religion, Kidd insists over and over again, is irrational, but he admits, as he must, that it works in many rational ways and accomplishes many rational things. Would it not have been more logical to conclude that religion is not the contradiction but the fulfillment of reason? ¹

The fallacy of Kidd's reasoning lies in his twofold assumption that man individually is preponderatingly anti-social, and that the subordination of individual interests is an onerous condition. It is to be regretted that students of sociological phenomena persist

¹ Kidd's formal statement of his position does not employ the phrase "irrational," but always "ultra-rational sanction." But as he develops and illustrates his thesis it plainly appears that "irrational" far more accurately expresses his thought.

in setting up two opposing tendencies like individualism and socialism only to plunge them into an endless cut-throat competition and conflict, a condition of things which does not even exist in animal association. An individual with no interests in common with those of the society in which he lives is an abstraction unknown to experience. A society whose interests are antagonistic to those of its members is an impossibility. As a matter of fact, men's interests, duties and desires are bound together. Individualism and socialism are merely complementary aspects of the same thing. It is the worst possible social fallacy to argue, as Kidd does, that "the interests of the individual and those of the social organism to which he belongs are not identical," and are not "capable of being reconciled." He might as well argue that the interests of the individual members of the family group are antagonistic. The true view is that the group's interests are the interests of its individual members. It is passing strange that Kidd should so persistently overlook this, for he himself admits, as indeed, he must, that man's reason only produces its highest results when he acts in cooperation with his fellows. Precisely; but this cooperation is not only conducive to the future success of society but conditions its welfare at any given moment in the present. It is an answer to Kidd's position, though he will not have it so, to say that a given state of society is a natural product of the time and necessary for its progress. Many individuals, in all stages of society, have suspended what Kidd terms the onerous conditions of progress by which they found themselves surrounded, but they did so to their hurt and extinction. But that larger reason which we call the social mind has always tenaciously insisted—though not uniformly—upon imposing those conditions upon itself because it recognized in them the very *sine qua non* of healthy life and progress. But what is the social mind but the combination and unification of many individual minds, the residual store of human experience?

Neither will Kidd's definition of a rational sanction bear careful examination. For him that phrase evidently means any given individual's intelligence. But, surely, no greater mistake can be made than to seek for a rational sanction for progress in the opinion of one, a few, or even of many individuals who for one cause or another are antagonistic to what might be called the dispositional tendency of society to progress, and who, in consequence, are deteriorating, belong to that portion of the species which will suffer eventual extinction. Certainly, the conditions of civilized progress have no rational sanction for the Red Indian. Nor do a police force and a jail commend themselves to a criminal, nor "thou shalt not commit adultery" to a libertine. Certainly, the interests of a Red Indian and those of American industrialism are not identical to him. Nor are the criminal's interests, as he conceives them, those of organized society. But does that argue that civilization, organized society, has no rational sanction? To mean anything, this phrase as used by Kidd must refer to a sanction which is more than such an incidental by-product of reason as individual opinion; it must refer to the social mind, that mental unity which results from many minds in interaction. Would Kidd maintain that the social mind, public opinion, if one will have it so, does not sanction the type of civilization prevailing in these United States?

It is utterly unscientific and unsatisfactory to trace what Kidd so frequently refers to as "that great fund of altruistic feeling," which has been the dynamic of Western civilization, to a sanction of which nothing more definite can be predicated than that it is something "ultra-rational," something which, so far as it concerns the individuals upon whom it operates, imposes its restraints arbitrarily, inevitably, and incompatibly with the welfare of a large proportion of the units who compose a society for which "progress is a necessity from which there is simply no escape." Assuredly, the harmonization of religion and reason is not so hopeless a problem as Kidd seems to believe.

But enough in the way of criticism. Having pointed out what we consider the serious flaws in Kidd's argument, we must now hasten to express our satisfaction because of what we judge to be his great advance in the right direction—his criticism of the onesided intellectualism of Spencer and his followers, and the really able manner in which he emphasizes the importance of the religious sanctions in the development of Western civilization. His argument, as far as it goes, for the part played by Christianity ever since its introduction into the world cannot but be regarded as conclusive. Anthropology and history, he shows, unite in supporting his threefold contention that man's intellectual progress has been much more insignificant than has been generally assumed; that the difference between the lowest nature peoples and the highest culture peoples is mainly an ethical one; and that there is no discoverable direct connection between intellectual development and high socialization apart from religion. The all-pervasive motive force behind the development of Western civilization "has its seat," he rightly claims, "in that fund of altruistic feeling with which it became endowed when Christianity became a part of it." After this seemingly unequivocal declaration it is all the more to be regretted that so eloquent a pleader for religion should really have stopped short of doing full justice to his subject, for, after all, it must be confessed that he has failed to define the full place and potency of religion in social progress.

Let us now glance for a moment at M. Gabriel Tarde's conception of the function of religion in the light of his theory of imitation as the method or process of social organization or progress.

To begin with, we must question the adequacy of this theory as a psychological interpretation of social phenomena. The fundamental objection to imitation as a sociological explanation is that it is a process merely and not a causal principle at all. And then to disregard entirely the important and controlling part which innate or constitutional bias, or instinct, might even a priori,

without the hint which biology gives us, be supposed to play in the process, and to substitute therefor a purely objective and mechanical scheme, seems to be little short of intellectual obliquity, due in this instance to an over-much affection for a theory, the pet child of M. Tarde's brain. The extent to which he is carried by his bias is evidenced in his refusal to grant that men ever imitate each other simply because they wish to do so. Men only imitate each other's acts because they first imitate each other's needs. The very will to imitate is itself imitation.

According to M. Tarde "l'imitation joue dans les sociétés un rôle analogue à celui de l'hérédité dans les organismes."¹ It is, therefore, controlled by laws, logical laws, our author prefers to call them, though he admits that he might just as well have said teleological, seemingly without any suspicion that such an apparently simple admission really shatters his theory from top to bottom. But as his argument proceeds it develops that what he calls the logical laws really play a very subordinate role in the social process: "Mais il est très rare que l'action logique s'exerce de la sorte dans toute sa pureté."² Certain "extra-logical influences" have a way of interfering, and the poorest innovations are often imitated instead of the best. This being so, it need not surprise us to find M. Tarde devoting fifty-two pages of his book to the logical laws and one hundred and eighty-nine pages to the extra logical influences. It is somewhat difficult to say just what he means by the latter, but if, as he affirms, "Les causes logiques agissent quand l'innovation choisie par un homme l'est parce qu'elle est jugée par lui plus utile ou plus vraie que les autres,"³ it would seem that extra or non-logical influences operate according to a reverse rule. But this is nowhere so stated. However, the extra-logical influences seriously

¹ Les Lois de l'imitation, Troisième éd., p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 153.

³ Ibid., p. 153.

interfere with the operations of the so-called laws. Among the phenomena which M. Tarde discusses under extra-logical influences we find language, government, morality, art, and religion, in fact, pretty nearly all of life. Speaking of the last named he refers to its omnipotence and omnipresence in all the functions of society. "Si, au début des sociétés, tout, dans les moindres pensées, dans les moindres actes de l'homme, depuis son berceau jusqu'à sa tombe, est rituel et superstitieux, les sociétés adultes et achevées donnent le même spectacle."¹ As a matter of fact, "sans un établissement religieux assis et reposé après ses conquêtes, une civilisation forte et originale est impossible."² Hence, "Il n'est donc pas vrai que le progrès de la civilisation ait pour effet de reléguer la religion dans un coin des âmes."³

These brief quotations will suffice to illustrate M. Tarde's high esteem of the purpose subserved by religion in society, even though his view of its rise and development must be regarded as altogether inadequate.

M. Guyau's bulky volume on *The Non-Religion of the Future* deserves some notice as a reflection of a modern Frenchman's intellectual environment.

Religion, M. Guyau declares, is "an invincible tendency in man to try to understand what passes before his eyes." "It is simply a mythical and sociomorphic theory of the universe." "It is nascent science." Belief in a Providence is its most vital element. In these definitions, it is evident, religion is put upon a purely intellectual basis. The cause of religion is a desire to explain the universe. The explanation is religion. Hence religion is knowledge, or a substitute for it. According to this way of looking at it, the Ptolemaic system and the Evolutionary Hypothesis are religious.

¹ Ibid., p. 307.

² Ibid., p. 305.

³ Ibid., p. 306.

But M. Guyau affirms further, man being essentially a social animal, he could not be resigned in the presence of the success of antisocial conduct, and when it seemed that such conduct had succeeded humanly, the very nature of mankind tended to make it turn toward the superhuman to demand a reparation and a compensation. Here the basis assumed for religion seems to be as clearly an emotional one, dependence or fear. Indeed this is plainly avowed. "It was physical fear, timor, and not moral reverence, which gave being to the first gods."

Let us hear M. Guyau again. "Of all things it is most repugnant to him [man] to believe that the universe is fundamentally indifferent to the distinction between good and evil;" and "he has this conviction by virtue of the moral nature with which heredity has furnished him." This time, it will be perceived, religion is made to spring from an ethical germ somehow native to human nature. Sometimes, when it suits his immediate purpose, M. Guyau would have us conceive of religion as of intellectual origin; sometimes, for some other purpose, he would have us rely on the moral sentiments as its spring; and sometimes bald physical fear explains it.

But M. Guyau oftenest insists that, at first, religion and morality had nothing in common, yes, that religion frequently contained a visible germ of immorality within itself, that it was often morally retrograde, and is not now a sine qua non of life and superiority in the struggle for existence. Our author's inconsistency would seem to be hopeless. At one moment religion is antisocial, at another it serves as "reparation and compensation" for antisocial conduct. The explanation of the confusion is, however, perfectly simple. M. Guyau, having failed at the very outset correctly to analyze out the essential elements of religion, has never learned to make so elementary a distinction as that between religion and religions, between the essence and the phenomena of what he discusses.

Hence his superficial conviction that the days of religion are numbered. In passing that verdict he is evidently thinking of religious manifestations, of the transient expressions of religion. A glance at the future as he conceives it will make this plain.

Is it possible that mankind will be able to get along not only without religion but without any substitute for it? By no means, says M. Guyau, and straightway grows eloquent in describing the glories of that religionless age by supplying it with—religion! We shall still, he affirms, “have wings to support us in our flight through life, wings to support us in our flight past death.” The religion which supported us as individuals and as a society in the past with its hopes of immortality—for this function is willingly ascribed to the religion of the past by M. Guyau,—foreshadowed a time when, as a last stage in the struggle for existence, religion will be superseded both in its subjective and objective aspects by associations for intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic purposes, and metaphysical hypotheses will replace distinctly religious dogmas, and the “individual consciousness shall have achieved a higher degree of complexity and of subjective unity, and along with these a power of more intimate communion than they possess to-day.” This will develop, finally, into a complete fusion of all consciousnesses. And it is conceivable, thinks M. Guyau, that such a fusion of a sufficient number of consciousnesses may develop a kind of intercosmic consciousness and a universal spiritual society, which will be able to offer greater and greater resistance to the individual’s death, indefinitely prolonging life. And even when death finally closes the eyes of the body, the dying one will have entered “into possession of an immortality in the hearts of those who love him.” Finally, the “phenomenon of mental palingenesis, which is at present isolated, may gradually come to be extended to the whole human species.” Immortality may be an ultimate possession acquired by the species as a whole for the benefit of its members. At bottom this seems to be a kind of adaptation of

the indestructibility of force to the immortality of the soul. As force in general outlasts particular forces, so individuals die but the race lives on. The matter of fact reader may be pardoned for stubbornly continuing to believe that if individual immortality is an illusion that of the race is an absurdity.

If there are any who fail to find "consolation and encouragement" in this sort of thing, M. Guyau knows nothing better to say "than the simple and somewhat unfeeling words of the ancient Stoics, Be not a coward." Cheap and easy!

It is scarcely needful now to call attention to the fact that, like his more distinguished predecessors as officiants at the obsequies of religion, M. Guyau, after laboring through some five hundred pages to demonstrate that future man is bound to be nonreligious, finds himself compelled to offer him, after all, the consolations of that which he would take away from him, even though it be in an exceedingly diluted form. The eternal craving will not down.

The views of the German sociologist Lilienfeld¹ concerning the end subserved by religion in society are interesting for us chiefly because they bring into bold relief the apparent impossibility of dispensing with religion on any theory, no matter how purely biological the terms may be in which it is formulated. Indeed, it is Lilienfeld's avowed purpose to show that philosophy and science, especially the biological and social sciences, find their completion in religion, particularly in the Christian religion, the highest possible social force. Unlike Comte, Spencer, Ward, and others, Lilienfeld's theory does not stop with mere negations, but attempts to find the securest possible positive foundation for religion.

Like Spencer's earlier conception, Lilienfeld's idea of society is that of a real organism. Just as any natural organism con-

¹ Gedanken über die Socialwissenschaft der Zukunft, Fünfter Theil, Die Religion.

sists of cells, tissues and organs, so is it with society. And the author leaves little to be desired in the minuteness and definiteness with which he describes and illustrates the social organism's progress in terms of physical development. The individual is a microcosm accurately reflecting the social macrocosm, and just as individuals gradually come to a sense of duty to themselves by means of a series of checks and stimuli, so society comes to a sense of relationship to God. Religion, therefore, is of social origin. Its basis is an emotional one, desire. Men always desire one thing more than another. Whatever they desire most is, for the time being, their god. Hence the evolution of religion. The highly developed type of religious individual to-day satisfies his supreme desire by a psycho-physical union with the highest ideal-real social potentiality known to history; the kingdom of God. Religion, therefore, in the last analysis, functions as the satisfaction of an imminent human need which has its root in an organic relationship between God and humanity.

From this review of opinions of the function of religion from a purely sociologic standpoint, it appears that sociologists are in accord as to the restraining and conservative influence of belief upon social activities. Indeed, some, like Spencer and Ward, are inclined to so over-emphasize this aspect of its function that it becomes, in their hands, really inhibitive of progress. But our review has also shown that, thus far in the development of thought in this direction, writers have shown no disposition to claim more than this negative social usefulness for religion. Here and there, indeed, as Ward in the magazine article referred to above, and Kidd, we find a writer seemingly on the point of taking the next and almost necessary step, only, however, to halt in indecision. None seems willing to admit the use of religion in opening the avenues and directing the expressions of the progress of the race. They are reluctant to grant that it is capable of constructive results. LeBon, for example, reiterates that "The part played in the life of nations by universal beliefs

is so fundamental that its importance can hardly be exaggerated. History does not furnish an example of a civilisation establishing and maintaining itself without having at its base the common beliefs of all the individuals of a nation, or at the very least of a city.”¹ And Baldwin sums up his brief discussion of “ethical and religious sanctions” with these words: “Religious faith and with it religious institutions are, therefore, indispensable to humanity, because they represent normal and essential mental movements. They are necessary at once to ethical competence and to ethical progress. Yet it still remains true, * * * that in social progress they exert their influence indirectly, through the ethical sanction which is personal to the individual.”² Assuredly this is a wholly inconsequential conclusion. What, religion, this great mass of beliefs, this tremendous fabric of institutions, this indispensable human equipment, with which man has been busy from the first dawn of his intelligence until now, only exerts its influence indirectly, through still other channels? This cannot be the final word of explanation.

¹The Psychology of Socialism, p. 64.

²Social and Ethical Interpretations, p. 443.

PART II

THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF RELIGION

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AS A CONSERVATIVE FORCE

It is high time to formulate that working definition of religion referred to in the beginning of Chapter II and to outline a theory of the social function of religion.

For the purposes of this thesis, then, religion may be defined as *that reverential attitude which man assumes toward the Power which, he believes, manifests itself to him in the universe.*

This definition, brief as it is, recognizes, and assigns its appropriate function to, the emotional, intellectual, and volitional elements of religion.

This attitude is rooted in man's emotional nature, and on the side of content, may be merely an undefined feeling toward the universal, as in the fetish worshipper, or the definite conception of developed monotheism. It must be conceived of as the result of an original bewildering complex of feelings which became differentiated more and more into such more or less definite emotions as dependence, unworthiness, fear, hope and wonder. On the evolutionary hypothesis the intellect must also be considered always to have been one of the constituent elements of religion. And, as a matter of fact, as far back as we can trace it, all the subjective and objective phenomena of religion cluster around the intellectual factor of belief, meaning by this term a practical belief in a being or beings more or less definitely conceived and which can be comprehensively described as god or gods. The factor of volition, the conscious assumption of an attitude toward

the god or gods believed in, must likewise, of course, have a place in any definition. Sociologically considered, the word God includes the spiritual beings dreaded by the savage, the highly specialized God of orthodox Christianity, and the Unknown and Unknowable of Spencer, or any other predicate any one may prefer to bestow upon it. It is certain that a belief of some sort is essential to any kind of religion. It is psychologically impossible for man to be religious prior to his consciousness of a personality other than himself, before the intellectual cognition of some kind of a God.

But now, having reduced religion to a definition, it may be well to caution the reader that the thing itself, religion as a human experience, even in its lowest stages, is always something more than this cold concatenation of fossil words can imply. Definition is description. It, therefore, ignores worth, or value. It never quite tells the whole truth. Words cannot reproduce a painting, much less the beauty of an actual sunset. No definition quoted in these pages is precisely what a religious man means by religion as he knows and lives it. Religious experience, even in its poorest forms, is fuller, richer, more potent, than scientific analysis can disclose. Its fundamental elements may be distinguished, perhaps, but its finer gradations, its almost infinite combinations, escape all analysis. There is, for example, a great deal more in religion than, as Spencer would have us believe, a more or less orderly stratification of "ecclesiastical institutions" through human society. Religion has not been only a mere linking together down the ages, more or less logically, of institutions whose origin and development can be traced to this or that place or time and social exigency. Spencer's treatment of religion is like that of the philologists who, by the aid of such external elements as particles and extinct digammas analyze a production like the *Iliad* and upon a purely linguistic basis pronounce upon its value as an epic poem. But the *Iliad* is not a mechanical thing of so many verses and words only. These are of altogether secondary

importance. The real value of the poem, that in it which appeals to the human mind and heart and makes it live age after age, lies in its masterful portraiture of men and gods, in its linked human and divine, which charms, fascinates, and inspires. The feelings and desires of the Iliad's men and women make up life's content still for the majority of mankind. So, likewise, religion is not only institutions. It is a life, a universal life.

Religion thus defined we take to be the functional correlate in man of instinct in the lower animals, or, as Ward has it, the substitute in the rational world for instinct in the sub-rational. This, it should be noticed, is not to assert that religion is biologically a true instinct, though we could, perhaps, have safely taken that additional step with Marshall,¹ even though he considerably broadens the conception of instinct by including in it widely varying activities, instead of confining it, as is ordinarily done, to hereditary and relatively definite ones. But that would have led us too far afield for our present purpose, requiring us, among other things, to demonstrate not only the organic nature of religious expressions but their relative definiteness and invariable coordination. For our immediate purpose it is, happily, needful only to regard religion as a general trend of action due to long race experience, or persistently prevalent by imitation, or even as handed down by tradition. Hence the statement that it is the correlate, or substitute, in man of instinct in the brutes. And while it may be admitted that the analogy, for that is all it is, does not contribute anything to the scientific development of the subject, it is, it must likewise be admitted, a striking and instructive one.

A word of caution may not be out of place here for the unscientific reader. In thus defining religion and its function we remain, of course, wholly in the field of natural religion, and need not trench, in our discussion, upon the dogmatic and ecclesias-

¹ Instinct and Reason, ix.

tical forms of the positive or 'revealed' religions, except, indeed, as they may include elements in common with the former, such as a belief in God, a future life, and personal reward and punishment. The recognition of religious forces in society has nothing to do, primarily, with the question of theological dogmas or the comparative value of different creeds. The sociologist is quite content to leave all such questions in the hands of the theologians.

Now, in the struggle for existence, in which the law of the survival of the fittest dominates, instincts must be regarded not only as passive conservators of what has survived, but in addition, as positive and constructive, functioning to fit for survival.

The struggle for existence, amid variant conditions, inorganic and organic, external to the organisms involved, constantly demands new adaptations on the part of the organisms themselves, either in structure or constitution, in order to survive. In proportion as the adaptation is good or bad on the part of an individual or generation of individuals will the variation of the succeeding generation be better or worse, from the developmental standpoint. If it be better, only infinitesimally so, it will be by that much more able to survive. If it be worse, almost impalpably so, it will be that much more liable to perish. The slightest difference may turn the nicely balanced scale either for preservation or extermination. That is to say, in order to function for survival, instincts must be more than static, they must be sensitively adaptable. Merely static instincts amid shifting conditions of existence would result in degeneration and eventual extirpation. To function for survival, which is, in effect, to say, to make for progress, instincts must be adaptable, must be able to conform successfully to any new demands of the environment, must be spontaneously convertible into needful relations to the new conditions of existence. Darwin assures us that "It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly

scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, *whenever and wherever opportunity offers*, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life."¹ But this is only another way of saying that instincts are positive and constructive functions. A relatively successfully adapted instinct becomes at once a still better adaptation in a future organism.

Now, upon the assumed unity of the psychological and biological individual we can, of course, apply this doctrine to man's religious endowment as well, when it at once appears that he is supplied with this endowment relative to his life-process, for its guidance and control, and that there can, therefore, be no kind of religion that does not in some way subserve that process. I say no kind of religion, which does not mean that every differentiation of it must necessarily be immediately ancillary to life as we understand it. If some particular manifestation of religion does not seem to be directly promotive of life in the best sense, it would not imply conflict with this law, since it cannot be maintained that we indubitably know what is and what is not useful in the long and vast sweep of man's upward progress. And even though it could be demonstrated that some forms of religion are hurtful, the general adaptability of religion to human welfare would not thereby be impaired. That some races and peoples have remained static, have even perished, despite a tremendous development of the religious spirit does not, as will be shown more fully later on, militate against the argument. Religion is not the only condition of human progress. The physical environment is also a factor. Intelligence must make its contributions. But, other things being equal, the religious people will be the people most apt to succeed in the struggle for existence.

¹ Origin of Species, p. 60.

Hence, the important place of religion for man as the correlate of instincts in the brutes. The continuance and development of human life, in the fullest meaning of that term, also depends upon the degree of adaptation to the conditions of existence in which it is found. Harmony between it and its environment must be constantly maintained. But here, of course, vastly more than in animal association, the social milieu comes into play. The individual human being is much more dependent upon the society in which he moves for his progressive differentiation and survival. Among animals the physical environment is the important factor, with men it is their mental and moral association with each other. But in this high and complex domain of life there is always a strong tendency to destroy it. Feelings, intelligence, will, highly specialized, are forever prompting the performance of acts that satisfy immediate individual want but which do not, in fact, make for race survival. These acts in man correspond to those individual variations in animals which, be they never so slight, throw them out of harmony with their life conditions and tend to their extinction. The immoral, the criminal, are so many variants who are out of harmony with their environment and therefore on the road to extinction. Physical laws and forces on the one hand, social laws and forces on the other operate to their destruction. One of the functions of religion is to curb such variation by limiting the sphere in which desire and impulse may be gratified. Any form of degeneracy, therefore, except, in some instances, purely physical, is just so much evidence that the restraints of religion have lost their grip. Another of its functions, as we shall see presently, is to replace the individual sanctions with inclination and desire for social cooperation and ethical conduct.

Religion is not only formal, it is constitutive also. It is a power of restraint to prevent variations that would destroy the race, but in so doing it also, necessarily, fosters those actions and promotes those variations that tend to perpetuate and

improve it. The very restraint imposed by it upon the use and abuse of the individualistic forces, that is, for personal and egoistic ends, creates a necessity for the discharge of those forces in other directions, toward the social, the ideal, the Deity. Religion, therefore, is both an effect and a cause. As an effect it is the result of past construction. As a cause it is continually laying the basis for new and better adaptations and the higher organization of society. A successful variation of the standard of life is a new standard in the making.

This position is considerably strengthened when viewed from the standpoint of those biologists and psychologists who, in addition to the intellectual element in instinct, also recognize the will as a more or less active factor in it. Thus Cope sees clear evidence of will "in the determinate movements of many of the Protozoa in the seizing of food."¹ Sully declares that there is in instinctive impulse "a distinctly active element which forms the analogue, and in a sense the true genetical antecedent, of the conscious pursuit of an end."² That is to say, even the earliest indications of life reveal a choice of stimuli. In the lowest organisms this manifests itself in impulse, tendency. In the higher stages it becomes craving. In the human consciousness it is desire, desire for a definite expression of life. But, upon the evolutionary hypothesis, the choice must be directed toward that in the environment which stands in friendly relation to the organism in order to its survival. Those organisms that have survived did so choose.³ It is plain, if this voluntaristic psychology holds good, that the universal prevalence of the religious element in man's life can only result from his instinctive choice of it as tending to his

¹ Origin of the Fittest, p. 208.

² The Human Mind, II. 192.

³ J. T. Gulick, in Evolution, Racial and Habitudinal, demonstrates "the preponderance of self-initiated habit over environment" in snails on the island of Oahu. Quoted by Buckham in Christ and the Eternal Order.

preservation, fitting him for survival. Men are religious because religion is essential to race maintenance and progress.

Religion, then, functions for survival, first of all as a conservator. It does this in the guise of a social bond and as a restraint upon antisocial variations. Except in its biological dress this is no new thought. Plutarch expressed it long ago. Religion, he asserts, "contains and holds together all human society, and is its main prop and stay." And this is true of its lower as well of its higher manifestations, indeed, is perhaps truer of the former than of the latter.

Before passing to an examination of some of the many concrete instances in savage and civilized life that may be adduced to fortify this position, a word or two about the question of function will not be inept.

Some elements of consciousness function indirectly, others directly. To the former belong the emotional elements in general, whose functioning is always more or less mediate. To the latter belong the reflective elements, more thoroughly differentiated, and, therefore, always more directly related to man's various activities. There is, of course, no question that the religious attitude belongs, in the main, to the first-named class. For, though an individual here and there, and even a group of individuals for a period, consciously and directly modify and control their "daily walk and conversation" in order to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever," for the vast mass of mankind such a definite sense of values does not always exist in consciousness. That is to say, for most men religion influences the general character of their activities, rather than their specific acts. The normal individual's whole tone of life is religious. And this is true also of social systems, savage and civilized. Among the Australians the religious consciousness is absolutely identical with the social consciousness. All their actions and relations, individual and social, have a religious content. Among them control has not been differentiated — religion functions for all pur-

poses directly. In higher societies, though separate in thought and fact from other social activities, administrative, legislative, judicial, religion lends its powerful sanctions for the attainment of the several values aimed at by its general control of human dispositions.

For confirmation of all this we may now appeal to the conditions among primitive peoples as we know them to-day. It is true that this method, too heedlessly pursued, led Spencer very much astray. It must be kept in mind that differences of environment would bring about differences of thought and habit between the modern savage and primitive man. But there are weighty reasons for assuming a general parallelism between conditions among primitive groups of men and savage societies to-day.

Among the Araucanians, for example, a people without any government whatever, among whom the idea of authority is so little developed that the father does not even venture to control his household, and who have so little cohesion that they do not live together in villages, but as isolated groups, each of which is absolutely free, the force that binds them together, fuses them into a people, is a religious one in the form of a species of ancestry worship. They believe that their forefathers now people the Milky Way and from that high eminence watch their earthly children. Among those wild sons of the southern steppes physical kinship must be strengthened by invisible bonds, by a mystical relationship, in order to weld them together into a real brotherhood by a common awe, fear and reverence. Such community of interests, sentiments and thoughts as they have is based upon community of religious belief. All of which means that the real social bond among this people is not the mechanical one of blood-relationship only, nor any merely mesological one, but is essentially psychological in its nature, and distinctly religious.¹

¹ Keane, *Man: Past and Present*, p. 427.

Nor can there be any doubt that a conviction of such mystical or spiritual relationship was basal in all primitive association, and must have been a powerful factor in the modification of conduct. Such a belief it must have been which led men inevitably away from a purely isolated existence with its ego-centric thought and action, if such human beings ever existed, to the conviction that others are on an equal footing with themselves, have identical rights and interests, and must not be looked on longer as more or less willing tools for the attainment of selfish ends. Such a conviction, such a vague apprehension, if you please, could not but modify, by intensifying, by solemnizing, in any group of primitive folk such natural rights as must have existed among them from the very beginning, and have gradually merged them into a principle of union which interpreted those rights and duties in new and fairer senses. Mutual aid, hitherto conditioned almost entirely by the food supply, or by the needs of attack and defence, was now broadened to cover many other relations and interests. Sympathy, hitherto in the germ, a bald consciousness of kind, was born, bringing in its train true social relations, or ties no longer merely objectively conditioned, but which can be explained in terms essentially psychic. Society began to exist in idea.

Among the Australian aborigines, by common consent the best example of arrested development left on earth, religion is the social bond and control par excellence. The natives are literally enmeshed in religion. Their life from day to day, including their most trivial and ordinary actions, as well as their most important functions, is directly and solemnly controlled by their religious feelings and ideas. The only socializing force in operation among them is the religious one.

Examine, for example, the social organization of their tribes. The highly intricate system of blood-relationship and the complicated marriage laws and customs in vogue among them are

based wholly upon totemism, which must now be recognized as an essentially religious social system.¹

Perhaps a word on this point will not be out of place before we pass on to illustrate it. It is true that no satisfactory explanation of the origin of totemism has yet been offered. Spencer's, that it is the result of verbal confusion on the part of primitive man, who first named himself after plants and animals, and then got these things mixed up with ancestors who had also borne such names, though typical of much shrewd guessing by investigators of this point, does not seem to have the least fragment of evidence to rest upon.² From what we now know of the habits of the savage mind totemism seems most likely to have had its roots in early man's conceptions of his relations to external nature. He believed himself to be actually descended from plants and animals. Australian aborigines still believe childbirth to be due directly to the totem, the women sometimes taking all manner of precautions to prevent its slipping into them. In other words, "Totemism is simply a primitive conception of family pedigree."³ It can readily be seen how, from such a conception, a socio-political scheme for the government of sex and other relations, could develop; and it is equally evident that such a conception, looking ever to the past and beyond the individual for authority and inspiration is essentially a religious one. But it would take us entirely too far afield to argue this question in detail.⁴

¹ For the facts about the Australians we are indebted to Spencer and Gillen's *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*. For the deductions drawn from the facts they are not responsible.

² *Principles of Sociology*, I. 337.

³ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May, 1904, p. 116.

⁴ The interested reader is referred for further light to Frazer's *Totemism*, Lang's *Social Origins and The Secret of the Totem*, W. R. Smith's *Kinship and Marriage*, the article in the *Annals* referred to above, and, especially, to the minute descriptions of totemic ceremonies in Spencer and Gillen's *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*.

Briefly summed up, the religious elements in totemism are: descent from or kinship with the totem; abstention from marriage within the totemic name; inhibition of sexual relationships within certain limits; the obligation of blood upon the slain man's totem kin; abstention (normally) from killing, eating, or using the totem; and belief that punishment follows upon the violation of any of these injunctions. Whether or no it is permissible to speak of "totem gods," the religious spirit of the system is beyond all doubt. Lang is in error when he asserts that it "proves nothing in the nature of a religious attitude towards" the totems "That magic is worked for their preservation and propagation."¹ Exclude the "magic" that is worked among them and you summarily do away with the only semblance of religion among many savages the world around. This "magic," which is always based upon certain more or less clearly defined conceptions of the universe and man's relations to it, is the savage religion.

If, now, we take the Urabunna tribe as a representative group of Australians, we find its members divided into a series of totemic groups, based upon a tradition that the members of the several groups are the descendants of certain ancestors who, in the Alcheringa, or most distant past conceivable to the native mind, were the progeny of the animals or plants or other objects associated with the totemic name. Now, these totemic groupings determine the marital rights, privileges and duties, of every individual member of the tribe, even to the minutest detail, and of course, quite completely determine the terms, or, rather, the degrees of relationships that may exist between them. And, let it be carefully noted, although nearly every degree of sexual relationship from promiscuity to monogamy is in existence among them at some time or another, the times and occasions even of the promiscuity are prescribed, and therefore governed and limited, by religious ceremonial, and the precise degrees of ordinary sexual relationship are always strict-

¹ Social Origins, Introduction, p. xi.

ly defined and maintained with the utmost rigor, and that solely with the aid of the religious sanctions. Among these savages, as among culture peoples, the average is sometimes invaded by the exceptional, the tribal custom and law is sometimes individually denied. But the violation of these customs and laws involves various degrees of punishment from tribal ostracism to death. Tylor's contention that among savages "ethical laws stand on their own ground of tradition and public opinion, comparatively independent of the animistic beliefs and rites which exist beside them," does not derive any support from what we now know about the Australian aborigines, upon whom religion and religion alone imposes the rigorous sexual restraint in vogue among them. Sex relations and processes are essentially religious to their minds.¹

Thus, marriage, or what among them corresponds to marriage in more highly developed societies, is attended and hedged about with the most elaborate religious ceremonies. A marriage always takes place as soon as a young woman arrives at the marriageable age, that is to say, upon the advent of sexual maturity, a period of life almost universally associated in the savage mind with the supernatural and in practice hedged about with significant religious ceremonies. At that time when she has been allotted in marriage always within the strictest totemic limitations, she is taken by friends of the man to whom she has been allotted, also selected under the same restrictions, out into the "bush" where, with the assistance of a Churinga, a sacred object, made of wood or stone, closely associated with the totems, there is performed upon her an operation called *Atna-ariltha-kuma*, or cutting the vulva. This ceremony not only transforms the girl into a married woman, but also bestows upon her certain social rights and privileges, as well as imposes certain duties in connection with the tribal customs from which, up to this time, she

¹ Compare, among Christian peoples, the fact that birth and baptism, confirmation and marriage are hedged about with religious ceremonies. Even in civil marriages the official frequently reads or repeats a prayer.

had been rigorously excluded. She now becomes a real member of the tribe by becoming an active factor in its social life.

The Australian Blacks have no organized tribal government, recognize no hereditary authority, and have no chiefs. And yet the social control among them is rigid and, for their stage of development, sufficiently efficacious. The nearest approach to chieftainship is the influence exercised by the *Alatunja*, or local headman of the group. His chief functions are religious or grow directly out of the religious character of his position. The only "two other classes of men who are regarded as of especial importance are the so-called medicine men" and the men who are supposed to have "a special power of communicating with the *Iruntarinia* or spirits associated with the tribe."

The power of inhibition is strongly developed and is based wholly upon religious principles. It is seen in operation in the elaborate ceremonies by which the boys are initiated into manhood and the women enter into a certain degree of tribal life.

The first ceremony takes place, in the case of the boy, when he is about ten years old, and consists in throwing him into the air several times, a proceeding which is supposed to promote his growth to manhood, and in painting his body with a design emblematic of his totem. After this the boy associates wholly with the men and begins to look forward to the time when he will be fully admitted to all the tribal secrets. The first step has been taken in the transition from youth to manhood. The individual is becoming a part of the community, his environment expands, his life enlarges, his duties multiply.

After an indefinite period the second stage of initiation occurs, called *Lartna*, or circumcision. Here also the sacred ceremonies connected with the totems are much in evidence. The women dance in imitation of the *Unthippa*, or malicious women of the *Alcheringa*. The old men caution the initiate against the betrayal of the secrets he is about to hear, on pain of being carried off by *Twanyirica*, or the great Spirit. Then, during a perform-

ance in which the boy's totemic animal is imitated, he is instructed in the sacred traditions, the gist of which is that he is himself the re-incarnation of the never-dying part of his ancestors.

The final rite in this particular ceremony is Ariltha, or sub-incision of the penis, which is a kind of social recognition of an individual's adolescence. It initiates a man into an entirely new life, so to speak, by permitting him to take a wife if he so desires, thus still more intimately incorporating him into the tribal life and destiny. It is attended by elaborate religious ceremonies.

Still another rite which functions directly as a kind of social control is the Engwura ceremony, which admits the men of maturer years into the most sacred secrets of the tribe and its totems. The chief object in view in this instance is to preserve custom by bringing the younger men under the control of those who are older, and to teach them habits of restraint and hardihood. These lessons are imparted by means of frequent references to the Alcheringa ancestors, and are copiously illustrated by the Churingas. The initiate is impressed with the deep importance of compliance with tribal rules, and the superiority of the older men who are in possession of the secrets, the intention clearly being to prevent any disintegrative functioning by individuals, by emphasizing the social bonds that exist between the individual and the group because of their common bonds with the past.

In the Kurdaitcha ceremony, also strictly religious in its nature, the police power of the group over its individual members is illustrated. It describes, and in so doing limits, the functions of the blood avenger. The Ertnatulunga, the mysterious storehouse of the Churingas, "may be regarded as the early rudiment of a city or house of refuge. Every thing in its immediate vicinity is sacred and must on no account be hurt; a man who was being pursued by others would not be touched so long as he remained at this spot." Even wild animals are here "tabu and safe from the spear of the pursuing native."

Thus the little semblance of civil government which exists in the weak social integration of these savages is seen to spring directly from their religious views and customs.

The relatively high pedagogical element which belongs to all these social religious ceremonies cannot be discounted. Barbarous and even revolting to us, they are very sacred to those naive children of nature, and effectively bind their participants to certain definite customs, obligate them to obedience, fix the boundaries beyond which individual whims and passions must not go, in short, compel individual suppression for the wellbeing of the group life. That we have here, therefore, a socially dynamic factor cannot successfully be gainsaid.

Even while human association was still determined only, as some writers contend, by physical causes, the need for restraint upon individualism must have made itself felt. Very early in his career primitive man must have learned that it was better that all the members of a group should be moderately well fed, for example, than that a few greedy individuals should appropriate the greater portion of the food supply while others lacked. This will be grievous heresy to those sociologists who place the origin of religion at some stage even later in man's development than the appearance of "notions of a common territory, of a common interest and defence, of a common leadership and allegiance, and of a common culture." But it is evident that, long before such distinct social integration had been reached as is implied by the possession of territory, leadership, culture, and other interests in common, there must have been developed some means of social control persistent and powerful enough under all conditions to curb the few for the benefit of the many. Nothing known to history has been able to tame the "bête humaine," to curb man's egoistic interest like religious considerations. It is perfectly gratuitous to look for and set up some other principle of control when this one lies so readily to hand as far back as we can trace the race. We can cheerfully remit the vexed problem whether the

question of the food supply gave rise to the religious ceremonies now in so many places connected with it, or the religious beliefs occasioned the "taboo" and other methods of attempted control of the necessities of life, to the anthropologist and psychologist. For the sociologist it matters little whether it is ever settled or not. The fact that existing "primitive" men do attempt to control and regulate their food supply by religious sanctions remains thereby undisturbed.

In the Urabunna tribe of Central Australia, representing the more archaic type of natives, who inhabit a region where vegetable and animal food, as well as water, are very scarce, even relative to the sparse population, the Intichiuma ceremonies are, perhaps, the most important that are performed, and in them "the religious aspect is most clearly seen." The performance is always closely associated with the tribal totems, and its specific object is to increase the number of the plant or animal after which the totem is called. The end in view is the control of subsistence. This is accomplished by means of the familiar phenomenon of taboo. The members of some tribes, consequently, never eat their totem animals or plants at all, others eat them only during certain periods, others only sparingly, or when driven by hunger. The effect upon the economic condition of the natives can readily be appreciated. It is an attempted mediation of ends based upon the fundamentally religious conviction of the superhuman and the possibility of man's contact with it. In essence it in nowise differs from the efforts of good Christians to interfere with the processes of nature when they pray to God for the prevention of a famine or the cessation of a drought.

An illuminating example of the binding effect of religious belief on the social structure is furnished by this taboo system, so characteristic of the entire Polynesian race, and forming, indeed, the basis of its society. It has now differentiated into what are really religious, moral and social phases, but religious ideas distinctly underlie each phase, and supernatural sanctions support

them all. The system was most thoroughly developed, perhaps, in the Hawaiian Islands, where a widely ramifying network of prohibitions made nearly every conceivable action a sin at some time and punishable by the gods. The regulations covered the entire daily life of the people, and, although in many instances exceedingly oppressive, were rigorously enforced. Bingham, who arrived on the islands in 1820, just after what might be called the official abrogation of the taboo, assures us that up to that time the "Ruling Hawaiian chiefs insisted rigorously on the observance of the religious rites" and that the great Kamehameha I was entirely unwilling "to abrogate or relax the ancient system of tabu."¹ As late as 1818 a little girl had one of her eyes scooped out for the offence of eating a banana,² a fruit which, in common with other palatable things, was taboo to the female sex. Other irksome restrictions—meeting on an equality with the attractive males from foreign lands, for example, were also placed upon the women. Hence these, as well as the men, had begun to find the system hard to bear, though not always from the purest motives. At last, in 1819, by royal example, the ancient taboo was deliberately broken at a feast at which men and women sat down side by side, a strictly prohibited proceeding. The great crowd of onlookers was filled with fear, some of the feasters hastily fled the neighborhood, and even the instigators of the daring plot to overthrow established religious principles were still fearful lest the outraged gods should take terrible vengeance. But when nothing happened, it began to be whispered around that the taboo was broken, the word was passed to the crowd, and with a great shout, was carried to the ends of the islands. Oppressive to a degree quite inconceivable to an intelligent Anglo-Saxon, and overthrown in a moment of reckless frenzy by a constituency which it had controlled for generations, so potent had become the pedagogical in-

¹ Sandwich Islands, p. 55.

² Alexander, *A Brief History of the Hawaiian People*, p. 49.

fluence of the system, so thoroughly had it moulded men to obedience to social law and order, that it was scrupulously and rigorously enforced to the very last moment of its power.

And now as to the results. The official historian of Hawaii for the Board of Education under the late monarchy has this to say: "The effect of it [breaking of taboo] was like that of displacing the key-stone of an arch. The whole structure both of idol-worship and of the tabus fell at once into ruins."¹ Revelry and license immediately followed. Bingham, an eye-witness already quoted above, assures us that "licentiousness and revelry abounded." "The country was in confusion."² In fact, civil war ensued, in which the anti-taboo party won a decisive victory, when "Irreligion, heathen amusements, licentiousness and revelry, abounded, and atheism took the throne." Intelligent observers of the social life of Hawaii do not hesitate to affirm that the effects of that religious revolution are still felt to-day in the morally debauched condition of the native population. 'Civilized diseases' (!) are fast destroying the race.

Another and very conclusive and suggestive illustration of the conservative power of religion is supplied by the intimate inter-relationship of religion and law throughout West Africa, a region where the social structure is relatively very closely knit together, but where there are, nevertheless, no policemen and no jails, and yet private property is neither damaged nor taken from an individual member of the group, either bond or free, without due process of law. Business is carried on in a fashion to astonish the civilized and christianized Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton. To quote from a singularly open-minded observer and student at first hand of customs in this region: "as you walk along a bush path far from human habitation, you notice a little cleared space by the side of the path; it is neatly laid with plantain leaves,

¹ Ibid., Brief History of the Hawaiian People, p. 169.

² Sandwich Islands, p. 77.

and on it are various little articles for sale—leaf tobacco, a few yams, and so on, and beside each article are so many stones, beans or cowries, which indicate the price of each article.”¹ The owner of this primitive shop has calmly gone about his business elsewhere, maybe miles away. And Miss Kingsley adds, and this after years of intimate acquaintance with the natives, “I have never seen or been told of a case wherein a man’s or woman’s property had been seized and taken by another person.”²

Now, it is the unanimous opinion of travelers and ethnographers that the African trait par excellence is stealing, a survival, doubtless of primitive promiscuity of property. Theft prevails from one end of the continent to the other. No white man’s goods are safe at any moment day or night. No system of police penalties seems to be equal to the emergency. But the native’s possessions are absolutely safe from native pilfering fingers. Wherein lies the difference? What is the method of this effective social discipline? What is it that holds in leash such frail creatures of appetite and propensity, puts the curb upon their strong desires and suppresses the irruption of their passions in this direction? The answer is found in a single word, fetish, which, in turn, is based upon a fundamentally religious conception of the status of man in nature. Let us go with Miss Kingsley again to that shop by the bush path. She says “you will see, either sitting in the middle of the things, or swinging by a bit of Tie Tie from a branch above, Egba, or a relation of his—the market god—who will visit with death any theft from that shop, or any cheating in price given, or any taking away of sums left by previous customers.”³

The same keen observer supplies us with another illustration, this time in connection with the African’s views on lying. To his simple mind there is no intrinsic harm in lying if any one

¹ Kingsley, *West African Studies*, p. 408.

² *Ibid.*, p. 409. cf. p. 367.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

is fool enough to believe him. Miss Kingsley assures us that she "would not take an African's word on any important subject." But even the savage recognizes that without some check and control in this connection, without some assurance of truthfulness, men could not live together at all. Hence we find the whole subject surrounded with an entirely different atmosphere in the presence of the fetish. Put an African on oath, make him call in a spirit to witness his statement, and, says Miss Kingsley, "I would stake my life, as I have many times already done, on the word of the wildest bush cannibal in all West Africa if that word were spoken under oath." Why? Simply because the African believes, and the belief has so firm a grasp upon him that it really controls him, that the spirit "will make the man who tells a lie in its presence swell up and burst."¹

As an illustration of the results accruing upon the undermining and breaking down of the religious sanctions among a highly civilized people, France may be cited as the most disastrous of modern, if not of all times. A few words in regard to it will not be out of place here.

During the eighteenth century religion had lost much of its virility and power all over Europe, and that among all grades of the population, more especially among the educated and ruling classes. The attitude usually assumed toward the prevailing forms of Christianity was, however, rather a passive than an active one. But in France the movement took the form of a violent and destructive passion of opposition. Speaking generally, the entire nation, through its representative men, wrought with feverish energy to expel the ancient faith from its heart and mind, and from every semblance of influence upon its life, and for the time being seemingly succeeded. Neither the remote nor immediate causes for this phenomenon need concern us here. They have been ably expounded by others. We have to do merely with

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

the indubitable fact that the spirit of Voltaire's "Écrasez l'infame" had become the fanatic passion of a great body of his countrymen. And this phase of the Revolution it was, we insist, that stamped its character, was directly responsible for its terrible extravagances, for its violent and destructive results. "Nothing," says DeTocqueville, "contributed more to give its features that terrible expression which they wore." The philosophic historian was undoubtedly right. The supreme binding sanction having been formally abolished, after having been practically discarded by the people, there was nothing to hold errant human passions in check, to confine them within those safe and sane channels in which the nation's socialization had heretofore made such steady progress, and the civilized world beheld for the first time the spectacle of a human society, reputed the most advanced in the world, alienated not only from its neighbors but from itself.

In considering this unique phenomenon from the viewpoint of our thesis, that is to say, in order to make good the contention that the terrifically anti-social explosions of the Revolution were the result of the undermining and shattering of the religious sanctions, such as the belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in future rewards and punishments, it is necessary to contrast conditions in France with contemporaneous conditions in Europe, especially in Germany, Austria, Italy, and England. Industrially the conditions in those countries were much like those in France, only, perhaps, even worse. The peasantry everywhere was frightfully ignorant and hopelessly poor. Artisans were poorly paid, bread was dear, taxes were high. Socially the same class distinctions existed, although the French peasant was a freer man than his brothers, the feudal serfs of Germany and Italy. But everywhere alike privilege and inequality were the conspicuous social traits. Intellectually the same spirit of free enquiry was abroad, and a growing discontent and a vague idealism characterized the thinking of the latter half of the century. But in France

the doctrine of "equality," of "natural rights," so passionately preached by the philosophers, had filtered further down among the masses than elsewhere. Although the profounder thought of Germany and England had furnished the original material of this conception, it was first popularized in France. Morally the proletariat of all Europe was incomparably brutal and debased. License ran through all society. Court circles presented sad spectacles of demoralization. Many of the philosophers were notoriously licentious.

It is when we enquire about contemporaneous religious conditions that a great gulf opens up to our view between France and the remainder of Europe, especially England, where the transition from the old to the new conditions was made with the least friction, as we shall see later. It was in 1751 that the first volume of the work appeared upon which the intelligence of France was to feed for a generation prior to the Revolution. That work was the *Encyclopedia*. Its position on religious, philosophical, and political questions was extreme. Its authors boldly proclaimed their conviction that there was no God, that morality was a species of slavery unworthy of a free man, and that the uncivilized stage of progress in the world's history was the ideal condition. Nor were these merely academic conclusions. They were the bold statement of the results of well-nigh a hundred years of living and thinking in which the empire of the old religious ideas was shorn of much of its power. And when, at last, Diderot and his companions daringly focused the new thought into words the masses were ready to receive the new doctrines; they were eagerly accepted by at least a majority of the people of France, and the inevitable disappearance of the authoritative elements in government and morality speedily followed, as they have always done, upon the heels of a discredited religion. Nowhere else in Europe had the anti-religious propaganda made such progress. The significance of this fact is immense in view of the relative stability of social

institutions elsewhere when compared with the destructive results in France.

And the argument becomes somewhat stronger when we contrast the manner in which the principles of the Revolution were received in certain sections of France itself, with its reception in Paris and the country dominated by its spirit. Along the coast of the Bay of Biscay, and between the Garonne and Loire rivers lay a country the people of which "retained a strong attachment to their ancient habits, and particularly to their religion and its ministers."¹ "The priests—men of extraordinary purity of character—exercised there a truly paternal ministry."² In these parts people knew scarcely anything and cared less for the principles of the Revolution, and when, at last, it began to make itself felt among them, instead of finding a welcome as a beneficial reform, it shocked their sensibilities and was received as a persecution.

It is interesting to reflect that "The communistic revolution in Paris, 1871, while accurately speaking not avowedly a revolt of those holding to the economic views which bear this name, was yet thoroughly imbued with their spirit and was thoroughly atheistic. Its leaders raged and swore against the Almighty, massacred priests, profaned churches, and did everything within the scope of devilish ingenuity to evince their contempt for all things sacred."³

A discriminating survey, by way of contrast, of English industrial, intellectual, political, and religious life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will reveal very clearly, we venture to think, how much religious belief influences the social life of a people, not only in the way of a restraint but as a positive dynamic for the progress of the organized communal life.

About the middle of the eighteenth century the English so-

¹ Thiers, *The History of the French Revolution*, II. 334.

² *Ibid.*, p. 336.

³ Lorimer, *Christianity and the Social State*, p. 193.

cial structure, as elsewhere in Europe, was under a tremendous strain. The old agricultural and industrial systems were passing away, and, as always in a transition period, when economic conditions are false than usual, the sufferings of the labor population were great. The spirit of democracy, born as far back as 1688, was beginning to find a voice in men like Burke and Pitt. The triumphant and audacious spirit of revolt against established customs, rights and powers, spreading everywhere in Europe, and rapidly gathering strength in France for its great historic cataclysm there, was beginning to make itself felt in England also. Already, in 1740, spasmodic riots had begun, and sympathy with the French people was widespread, and it needed but little to start the English proletariat upon the same bloody road which its brothers in France followed with such terrible earnestness and ghastly thoroughness during the Terror. But, happily for England and the world, the adjustment to new conditions took place without such a cataclysm, and contrasted conditions in England and France to-day are evidence of the superior virtues of the peaceful revolution over that of fire and blood.

Can we put our finger upon the causative principle of this difference and trace it in its operations? Why this steadiness and sobriety of England's attitude, with scarcely a single serious physical conflict, during a painful and cruel social adjustment, instead of a wild orgy of anarchy as in France?

That the whole body of English political, religious, and intellectual traditions—the temper of the people—must be taken into account in such an enquiry goes without saying. The causes that brought about a peaceful revolution go far back in English history. No doubt, the fact that Englishmen are Englishmen and not Frenchmen has something to do with the phenomenon we are discussing. But it is worthy of note that England's being England did not prevent the life of its people in the eighteenth century from being ignorant, stupid and brutish; did not forestall the crushing weight of poverty that rested on the peasant and artisan

classes; did not bar coarseness and corruption with recklessness from the higher walks of life; did not keep the Church from a barren formalism and cold callousness to human need; did not, in short, prevent an industrial, political, moral, and religious condition of things which supplied just such soil from which bloody revolutions sprang on the continent. England's traditions and hereditary temper doubtless had much to do with her happy adjustment of trying conditions, but in this sense, that they enabled the Englishmen of the last half of the eighteenth, and the first half of the nineteenth centuries to welcome and use the agency which mediated between the old and the new, as a slower, but certainly more wholesome method of adjustment, namely, the religious revival that began with the preaching of Whitfield and the Wesleys.

It is true that the mere fact of sequence does not necessarily argue causal connection, but we venture to assert that one will search in vain for an explanation that will better meet all the requirements of the problem than the one here suggested. No other social force is discoverable in that day competent enough to meet the social problem and lead its solution in the wholesome direction which it took then and still pursues to-day. Nothing could so have repressed the strong passions that were smoldering dangerously in English industrial and political life at this time as the quickening of religious principles and ideals and their enthusiastic application to the situation. Only by the pressure of religious sanctions could consciences have been so aroused to alertness to the distinction between the right and the wrong, only so could minds have been molded to a sympathetic understanding of a dangerous situation. Only the appeal to love and fellowship in the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God could have preserved a social equilibrium so seriously threatened, and which in France was destroyed in horror and bloodshed. The conservative power of religious belief was never more strikingly illustrated. Despite the noble principles which animated it—principles which underlie the modern state—the Revolution, repudiating religious belief, could destroy, but it could not build up.

It may be well to notice some of the objections to the conclusions reached in this chapter which have, in all probability, suggested themselves to the reader. They can only be referred to here and the possible lines of reply indicated.

It may, for example, be urged that a large number of historic instances of religious expression not only did not make for progress but must often have been detrimental to a wholesome social and ethical development, yes, must have been positively demoralizing to their devotees. What, to cite only a few cases, can be said of Phallicism, Mahometanism, Mormonism, religious persecutions, such as the Inquisition, and the extreme religiosity of sexual and other degenerates, as socializing forces?

It may be replied, in a general way, that the development of religion, in harmony with all other evolutionary phenomena, did not always proceed in a straight line, nor without checks and degenerations. Other instincts and social forces have been misapplied and abused by man, why not this one? It is not at all needful to deny or even to evade the fact that certain expressions of religion have been deleterious to their adherents. But there can be no manner of doubt that, when the whole field is impartially surveyed the good effects of religion vastly outweigh the bad. Even nature religions are always on the side of social order and tribal laws, that is to say, are identified with primitive morality, even though not always fitted to push that morality in the direction of higher ideals.

Replying to the objections in detail, it may safely be claimed that the so-called religious thieves, prostitutes, and murderers, which certain Italian criminologists especially love to parade before us, may be dismissed as having no bearing upon the subject. They must be regarded as wholly abnormal.¹ We do not permit ourselves to judge a nation's moral health by a few pathological

¹ Baer, *Der Verbrecher*, pp. 257 seq.; Garofalo, *La Criminologie*, pp. 85 seq.; Lombroso, *L'Homme Criminel*, I. 131 seq.

excrescences in its purlieus and jails. We do not condemn a church because it numbers among its members some hypocritical and unworthy individuals. Nor does it discount the value of religion as a progressive force that, here and there in the worldwide area of its influence, that influence is exercised in vain.

Of phallicism too little is yet known to pass judgment upon its place in the evolution of religion and its effect upon the social structures in which it flourished. The reader will search in vain in the pages of Tylor, Müller, Spencer, Reville, Waitz, Roskoff, and other authorities, for even so much as the mention of such a religious cult. Bancroft devotes to it only eight pages of somewhat vague generalization in his extensive work on the Native Races in America.¹ R. H. Matthews is in error when he classes such rites as we have described as practiced by the Australians as belonging to phallic worship. As a religious system it must be definitely restricted to the worship of the phallus.² The still extant phallicism of Japan, as described by Buckley,³ certainly differs *toto coelum* from that which the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum reveal as having flourished at that time among the Romans, even if we do not ascribe all the erotic art of the period to the influence of this cult. In the former case it seems to be a naive and comparatively innocent nature worship, with none of the disgusting excesses of the worship of lust met with elsewhere. In the latter instance it was a distinctly libidinous orgy of the already sated lust of a practically atheistic society. It is vastly significant that this particular expression of religion never took root among the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic peoples, though there are traces of it even among them.

¹ Works, III. 501 seq.

² Cf. Proceedings of American Philosophical Society, 1900, p. 622.

³ Phallicism in Japan.

Indiscriminate condemnation of phallicism is, therefore, somewhat unwise in the present state of our information. It is a perfectly safe inference, however, from what we know of the habits of the savage and barbarous mind, that primitive man could have seen no impurity or impropriety in the gratification of any natural appetite, and that the worship of the fecundating principle, the creative power of nature, exemplified so mysteriously and so potently in himself, was the meetest act of worship he could adopt. Such naturalism is still practiced by some of the Russian schismatics.¹ There is no evidence that originally this cult had any connection with those indescribable acts of sexual excess and even beastliness usually associated with it in our minds to-day. The impure excesses, the disgusting eroticism of later periods was the result of decay, an indication that the religious spirit of the cult had succumbed to the sway of that sexual instinct which its own symbolisms only too strongly called into play. If phallicism did at one time and another prevail as extensively as some would have us believe, it but affirms what adolescent psychology teaches us of the close inter-relation of the sexual and spiritual, how the fierce stimulation of the former often goes hand in hand with the latter, though there is no proof, as yet, of any causal connection between them, and illustrates the strength of the sex-instinct with which religion has always had to grapple and which it has, at least among the higher races, now so thoroughly subdued.²

And as to Mahometanism. From a social standpoint it may be classed with ancient Mosaism, which also tolerated polygamy. Both cults were, however, distinct and relatively successful efforts to regulate and control sexual excesses. Mormonism belongs to that large class of instances which illustrate but too well the success of religious belief as a conservator and method of social

¹ Leroy-Beaulieu, *The Empire of the Tsars*, III. vii.

² See for some discriminating remarks hereon, Marshall's *Instinct and Reason*, pp. 309 to 315.

control. Imitation is the sincerest flattery. That religion is often abused for the sake of an ulterior and unworthy purpose does not justify the hasty conclusion that its influence is always injurious. And, doubtless, the original roots of this new mechanical and systematic alliance of the animal with the spiritual are to be sought for, psychologically, in over-stimulation of the religious element in its first devotees.

And as to those phenomena so luridly illustrated in the pages of history by the Holy Inquisition, it will be enough to call attention to the patent distinction that, while the name of religion was invoked in justification of its excesses, it was really the interests of an institution that supplied the motive force for those fierce activities. Religion had long had an artificial civil sanction, and dynasties had come to depend upon its dogmas, hence, though the enforcement of religious unity for the salvation of souls was perhaps the original purpose of the Inquisition, as well as similar persecutions carried on by Protestants, a large admixture of lust of power and wealth also came into play.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION AS A PROGRESSIVE FORCE

The problem which we shall now discuss may be formulated in detail as follows: The course of human history shows a continued, though not always uniform, progress from a lower to a higher order of society, the substitution of a rational and ethical process, controlled by altruistic principles, as against the so-called cosmic process which works according to the law of natural selection, and in which the strongest survives at the expense of the weaker. For the sake of argument it may be admitted that certain controlling instincts in the lower animals in their struggle for existence are sufficient in themselves for the development of the individual and social human organism up to a certain point. But it must also be admitted that, when they advance beyond that point these selfsame passions tend to become, and do become, forces of disintegration, degeneration, and death. This being true, it is apparent that, if the progress from the lower to the higher is to continue beyond this point, these disintegrating and death-dealing forces must not only be subordinated and suppressed, there must also emerge a new and sufficiently potent countervailing force, capable of creating new desires and purposes, higher than those which actuated man before, and yet as thoroughly germane to his nature as those which formerly controlled him. But it is evident that such a force cannot be mechanical, but must be rational, cannot be physical, but must be psychical. It must not come from without, but from within the organism itself. In other words, such a force must be in the nature of an ideal principle.

Now, the history of the past makes it sufficiently manifest that this ideal principle is supplied by religion, and by religion only.

Psychologically it can be postulated only on the supposition that God exists. Empirically it is conditioned upon the belief that God helps. An injunction and impetus to a higher life, to be persistently effective with large masses of men, must come to them not merely with the authority of a single human mind, no matter how overshadowing, nor yet of a combination of such minds. To be effective it must have the universal significance of something absolutely worthful. And it is precisely this which is supplied by religion and religion alone. In our review of opinions about the functions of religion we saw how the opponents and depreciators of religion, Comte, Spencer, Ward, Guyau, all found it necessary to call in its aid, freshly labelled, just as soon as they reached the point referred to above in the social development, when the principles and forces which they had invoked in their attempted explanations of human progress inevitably beget, in their turn, other private and social evils to threaten the good of the whole. The attempt to identify this ideal principle as Reason¹ may be considered to have suffered final shipwreck when Kant felt himself compelled, inconsistently, to lug in a kind of religious guarantee for the achievement of the summum bonum. The suggestion that the cosmic drift is in that direction, holding this principle, so to speak, in solution, and destined ultimately to reveal it fully, is thus referred to by Huxley: "The theory of evolution encourages no millennial expectations." The "cosmic nature born with us and, to a large extent, necessary for our maintenance, is the outcome of millions of years of severe training, and it would be folly to imagine that a few centuries will suffice to subdue its masterfulness to purely ethical ends."²

Religion, then, is the only idealistic principle. It is the main spring of all altruism. It is the chief mediating principle between the social is and the social yet to be, between the social wish

¹ In the Kantian sense, of course.

² *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 85.

and the social ought, between the ideal and the real. Investigation will reveal this to be true not only of its higher manifestations, but even of its lowest forms.

The role which faith, belief in a person or persons, in an institution, in a national ideal, has played in the long process of human socialization, has never been sufficiently investigated and evaluated. In a rather vague way men have always been conscious of it as a practical necessity, as something growing out of the needs both of the individual and the group, in order to social cooperation and success, but it has thus far eluded analysis and definition. Without it, of course, the simplest family relationship would be impossible above the purely biological. Without faith in its parents the child's developing individuality could not orient itself at all in the bewildering complex of connections into the midst of which it finds itself already thrust at the very first dawns of consciousness. Without it, and this is another commonplace, business and government, the latter more especially in its democratic forms, would be utterly impossible. But this faith, this belief in men, in institutions, in gods, in God, is always an idealization, a spontaneous creation of something better or stronger, higher or more enduring, than anything given by immediate experience. True, it is nearly always grossly anthropomorphic, it is the best, the most potent that we are conscious of in self raised to its highest powers. But as such it pulls and lifts us up toward its newer standards. Granted that men first think their gods, it is nevertheless true that their thoughts of god afterward make them godlike.

The mere belief in a God, a Superior Being, a Higher Power, necessarily raises man's thoughts above himself, stimulates a desire in him for something more than he has, or knows, or is. It is true that in the nature religions of savage tribes, such as those in Africa, the malevolent gods predominate and religion seems to be more an agony of terror than a pursuit of the good. But the latter phase is there, be it never so slight, and to the extent of its presence

the result is beneficial. In the most fantastic animism, or crudest fetishism, or irrational polytheism, there is always at bottom the universal principle of the supernatural, the absolute, with all its germinal promise and potency. And the history of religion reveals, significantly enough, that this primitive dualism of good and evil becomes ever gradually less absolute as men rise in the scale of culture. In proportion as man's thought of the gods became more definite, in proportion as he invested them with higher social meaning, his assurance of the final triumph of the good became clearer, and at last evil itself comes to be looked upon either as a mere passing phase of existence or as a means to a greater ultimate good. Christianity, idealistic to the core, altruistic always, gives clear and concrete expression to the conviction of the final harmonizing of human life in God: "We know that all things work together for good."

To be somewhat more definite, what does the belief in his god do for the savage socially? One of the distinguishing features of his religion if, indeed, it is not the principal one, is that it is not an affair of the individual but of the community. It identifies the individual with the tribal unity in such way that when, as often occurs, his natural appetites and the well-being of the tribe happen to clash, he recognizes an authority which holds the former in check for the benefit of the latter, and often compels him to subvert himself, a part, even to self-immolation, for the welfare of the tribe, the whole. It is not meant, of course, that every individual always consciously lives his life with such larger social duty in view. The most enlightened citizen of the most highly civilized nation is not so thoroughly co-ordinated into his environment as that. Man's real basis of life is too far below consciousness to make such a thing ordinarily possible. But the higher purpose is there, in sub-liminal solution, so to speak, but ever ready to crystallize into a definite consciousness under the appropriate stimulus, and eliciting then a social behavior which sacrifices what it conceives to be its own individual interests for the welfare of

its fellows. And this devotion to the common welfare is the very core of primitive morality, and the soil out of which have grown those civil virtues of loyalty to the nation and devotion to country which have borne so much heroic fruit in times of danger and distress in all societies. And out of the habits fostered by that tribal morality peculiar to all primitive people, 'a morality so narrow and abhorrent to the modern culture peoples, has sprung that ethical universalism which strives to embrace all mankind in its benevolence. Thus the germ of the very highest altruism, briefly comprehended in the Christian doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, lies imbedded in the most primitive savage belief in a Superior Power.

Once more. When the Greenland Esquimau, or the Laplander, or the South American Indian, in his efforts to become a Shaman, or Medicine Man, that is to say, to come into possession of a spirit, retires for long days and nights into desert places, deep forests, or high mountains, for fasting and meditation, what is he achieving of social value? It must be granted, we think, that even so inferior a human being, by such solemn exercises, raises himself, for the time being at least, above the purely sensual and experiences somewhat of that supersensuous which it has ever been the craving of the finer spirits of the race to achieve. Certain it is that he strives, like unto medieval saints, by keeping his body under, by "denying the flesh" to "live by the spirit."

Von Humboldt, referring to a religious practice which he witnessed in South America, that of blowing the "botuto" or sacred trumpet, to make palm trees more fruitful, says: "On the banks of the Orinoco there exists no idol, as among all the nations who have remained faithful to the first worship of nature, but the *botuto*, the sacred trumpet, is an object of veneration. To be initiated into the mysteries of the *botuto*, it is requisite to be of pure morals, and to have lived single."¹

¹ *Travels*, II. 363.

But what is this but an ideal of worth, set not only before the candidates for the "botuto" mysteries, but before the entire tribe, of a better life than that of their ordinary experience? And when it is measurably realized by individuals here and there who, in consequence, are admitted to this "priesthood," who can say that their success does not act as an incentive to still others to be "pure" in morals and live "simple"?

Again. When the Australian Blacks refrain from eating their totem animals or plants in obedience to the "taboo," and do so in the face of dire temptation due to hunger and want, can it be denied that they are thereby being taught, crudely, it is true, from our higher cultural standpoint, but efficiently for their environment, some of those lessons of self denial and surrender which the Christian church has been seeking to inculcate upon the world for nearly two thousand years, both by precept and example, and which all but thorough-going Nietzscheans unite in regarding as useful and lauding as praiseworthy? Is there no social significance in the ceremonies by which the native is prepared for beholding, for the first time, the Ertnatulunga, or sacred places of the tribe? "If he be what the natives call *irkun okmirra*, that is light and frivolous, and much given to chattering like a woman, it may be many years before he is admitted to the secrets." Referring to these ceremonies Wundt does not hesitate to say: "Es sind, wie man sieht, Normen einer primitiven Moral, die * * * von den sittlich-religiösen Geboten der alten Kulturvölker, wie sie uns z. B. im mosaischen Dekalog überliefert sind, [nicht] allzuweit abweichen."¹

Among the Creek Indians the important festival of first-fruits gave positive evidence of efforts on the part of the participants to rid themselves of moral taint, of sin. A quotation from Waitz will make this plain. 'Der Priester oder "Feueranmacher," welcher dabei ganz weiss gekleidet war—Weiss war das Symbol der Rein-

¹ Völkerpsychologie, II. ii. 263.

heit und des Glaubens hier wie bei den Irokesen—besorgte die Anordnung desselben. Mehrtägige strenge Fasten des Volkes machten den Anfang. Darauf brachte jener das neue heilige Feuer zum Altar, verbrannte in ihm nach sorgfältiger Auslöschung aller alten Feuer etwas von allen Arten der neu geernteten Früchte, und ermahnte ausführlich die Männer und Weiber. Jene nahmen die "Kriegsmedizin" ein, die in heftigen Brech- und Purgirmitteln bestand, diese badeten und wuschen sich mit Wasser: alle Uebelthaten des vergangenen Jahres, ausser Mord, wurden in Folge hiervon als getilgt betrachtet und das Fest mit einer reichen Mahlzeit am vierten Tage beschlossen. Dass die Vorstellung einer Reinigung von Sünde diesen Ceremonien zu Grunde lag, insbesondere beim Baden und beim Trinken . . . wird bestimmt versichert.¹

To deny the idealistic element and influence of such religious beliefs and practices is impossible.

The *Ertnatulunga* of the Australian natives have already been referred to. They are the storehouses of the most sacred possessions of the tribes. Everything in their immediate vicinity—plants, animals and human beings—is regarded as sacred and must not be hurt. No display of arms is permitted near them. Quarrels in their neighborhood are prohibited.

A similar belief and practice prevailed among some of the California Indians, whose *vanquechs*, or places of worship, rude inclosures of stakes, within which the image of a god was placed, were sacred and could be approached in a reverent manner only. But each *vanquech* was also a city of refuge, "with rights of sanctuary exceeding any ever granted in Jewish or Christian countries. Not only was every criminal safe there, whatever his crime, but the crime was as it were blotted out from that moment," so far as the actual criminal was concerned, though, "for justice sake," the pun-

¹ Anthropologie der Naturvölker, Dritter Theil. p. 208. See also, Roskoff, Das Religionswesen der Naturvölker, p. 161.

ishment from which he escaped was meted out upon some of his relations; which seems to have been a curious attempt to satisfy both the claims of mercy and of justice.¹

The reader has already, as a matter of course, thought of the similar and well-known ancient Jewish legislation with its provision of six cities of refuge for the protection of offenders against the wrath of the "blood avenger."² Such "sanctuaries," it is also well known, had their counterparts among the Greeks and Romans, and other peoples.

Now, it is universally conceded that this right of sanctuary was one of the most humane features of ancient civilization, in that it was a positive mitigation of the cruelty and injustice that were only too common. It matters little, if it all, for the purposes of the argument, whether the religious instinct first prompted this mitigation, or whether the religious features of the practice were later superposed upon it as an additional sanction. The fact remains that, historically, this mitigation of cruelty and injustice was thus promoted by religious belief and practice, and that among peoples widely separated from each other in space and time. If the result was humane among the ancient Jews, Greeks and Romans, if among those nations it tended toward their survival by cultivating a larger sympathy and making wider room for the exercise of justice, it must, in some small degree at least, have accomplished the same results for the Australian and the Indian, and wherever else the institution was developed. There can be no reasonable doubt that, in addition to conserving life, this practice imposed a wholesome restraint upon individual passion, supplied opportunities for and thus cultivated mercy and forgiveness, fostered a social conscience, and promoted respect for law by guaranteeing justice both for the offender and the offended. The larger morality of to-day undoubtedly has its basis in the habits which were originally

¹ Bancroft, Works, III. 166.

² Joshua, xx. 7-9; Numbers, xxxv. 6-28.

formed and grew strong under the fostering care of just such institutions as this, and the part which religion played in suggesting and maintaining such institutions is one of its most beneficent services to social progress.

The extraordinary religious awakening in England in the eighteenth century, referred to in the previous chapter, not only functioned effectively, as there shown, in the way of restraint. It did more. It exerted a positive directive influence upon the whole of English life and thought by engendering a most extraordinary enthusiasm for righteousness, which, at first largely theological in form, soon became social in its effects. The social conscience suddenly awoke, a great wave of humanitarianism swept over the country, and moral principles began to be applied as never before to commerce and politics, and struggles for social reforms began to take shape in a dozen different directions at once. One scans the pages of English history almost in vain for any sign that either Church or State, during the first half of the eighteenth century, made any efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the poorer classes, or were even conscious of their hapless condition. On the part of the State the Workhouse Act of 1722 seems to have been the solitary symptom of such consciousness and effort during this period. As a factor in social control the Church was a negligible quantity. "It was an age of political prelates, of absentee bishops and fox-hunting parsons."¹ But after the middle of the century, when the religious revival was at its zenith, there came into being a social activity unparalleled for magnitude and results in England or any other country. With the opening of the nineteenth century this phase of the movement seems altogether to have overshadowed all its other features. Nothing was now heard of but reform. "Prisons, poor laws, penal codes, emancipation, reform bills, Jewish disabilities, slave trade and slavery, the relief of Dis-

¹Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 135.

senters, the establishment of schools, the reform of asylums, the founding of hospitals, the improving of cottages, the establishment of charity organizations for a multitude of purposes,"¹ all these occupied men's minds and enlisted their energies. And it is of the utmost significance that the men who originated and so earnestly championed these various measures were, almost without exception, the men who were most thoroughly swayed by the new religious fervor. The men who thought and felt most deeply religious were the men who felt their obligations to their fellows most and enthusiastically devoted their energies to their social betterment. For example, "The life of Samuel Wilberforce is almost a history of the establishment of these agencies for making and organizing social forces." Scores of others, all men of deep religious conviction, might be mentioned, in and out of Parliament, the champions of the larger and better national life.

We may be allowed to quote here the words of a not very sympathetic historian in summing up the benefits accruing to England from this movement: "In the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm, which, rigid and pedantic as it often seemed, was still healthy in its social tone, and whose power was seen in the disappearance of the profligacy which had disgraced the upper classes, and the foulness which had infested literature ever since the Restoration. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education."²

That is to say, the religious consciousness, become quick and sensitive, caused the acceptance, pursuit, and achievement of newer and higher ethical ideals.³

¹ Hall, *The Social Meaning of Modern Religious Movements in England*, p. 109.

² Green, *History of the English People*, IV. 150.

³ As a matter of interest, as well as furnishing clues for further investigation, we quote from a pamphlet by W. T. Stead on the religious awaken-

Again. One of the most widely ramifying religious beliefs is that of the continuance of life after death, with its almost inevitable correlate of the soul's future happiness or misery. And even though this latter feature, as Tylor maintains "seems scarcely known to the lowest savages," historically it appears in savage theology at a very early age, and, for our point of view, it matters not at all how it became "superposed on more primitive doctrines of the future life." It is discovered in every part of the world, and among men of every degree and variety of culture. It would be foolish to doubt its important bearing upon the thought and life of mankind. It has been, says Le Bon, "the principal strength of the great religions which have conquered the world and have endured."¹ The question is, are men better or worse because of this belief? Of what social value is the belief in immortality to mankind?

—For example, the Achalaque, of Florida, believed that "those who had lived well would be happy after death, whereas the wicked would be carried to a destitute and wretched existence." Guinea Negroes believed that souls, "on reaching the river of death must answer to the divine Judge how they had lived." Among the Dayaks, of Borneo, it is said that "as the smoke of the funeral pile of a good man rises, the soul ascends with it to the sky," while the reverse happens in the case of the bad. In West Africa the Nuffi believe "that criminals who escape punishment here will receive it in the other world." The Yorubas divide their hereafter into an

ing in Wales in 1905, the following "record of revivals" and the supposed results for the social life:

- 12th century—The Cistercian—Magna Charta.
- 13th century—The Friars—Parliamentary Government.
- 14th century—Wyclif—Peasant Revolt.
- 16th century—Tyndale—The Reformation.
- 17th century—Puritanism—Fall of Despotism.
- 17½ century—Quakerism—Revolution 1688.
- 19th century—American—Era of Democracy.

¹ The Psychology of Socialism, p. 83.

upper and a lower region for the righteous and the wicked. The Khoi-Khoi Hottentots give up the bodies of criminals, victims of vendetta, slaves killed by their masters, enemies killed in combat, to birds of prey and beasts in order that, after they have been devoured, they may become vassals of Gaunab, god of evil. Many other instances might readily be cited, but these will suffice as illustrations.

Tylor is inclined to deny that this doctrine is a "native conception," but must be regarded as the result of Christian or Moslem influences. Ratzel, referring to the Polynesian mythology, says, "The place where the wicked are tormented, which is represented as the night of everlasting death, and as a dark deep place at the back of heaven where the stars are hung, may well have been imported from some foreign schools of thought." But the ancient Hawaiian formulation of the belief in connection with the "taboo," is thoroughly consistent. Similarities of this kind, furthermore, are much more readily explained on the broad principle of the unity of the human mind than by the mechanical and always readily subservient theory of imitation. Waitz suggests that the divisions which the 'natural' races imagine as existing in the future life are based upon social, not moral distinctions, and cites the Milu and Wakea of the Polynesians by way of illustration. Milu is a place of carousal and rowdyism, Wakea a dignified spot for the chiefs. Is rowdyism a social or a moral distinction? Does it really matter which it is? Walhalla, he further suggests, was only for the brave. Is bravery a social distinction? Schultze¹ even argues that, having no conscience, the lowest savages feel no guilt, hence can have no conception of what we know as moral retribution. But he himself has described for us the self-imposed duties of the fetish worshipper, with the resulting discipline, which, in so many words, he refers to as an "ethicising factor." As a matter of fact, ethnography knows no people without at least a

¹ *Psychologie der Naturvölker*, p. 147.

rudimentary conscience. It may, then, be taken for granted that the belief in a future world always rests upon a basis of moral ideas, no matter how crude.¹

But the late development of this idea may readily be granted without discrediting the cultural results which have inevitably followed upon its appearance. These are so self-evident that it seems useless to rehearse them to the reader, and they are so beneficial that it requires no argument to demonstrate it. Whether originally derived from an independent source or not it is a fact that it now stands, universally, in the closest relation to morals, mightily reinforcing man's sense of "oughtness." Briefly put: With the appearance of this idea of a retributive immortality, this present life shrinks vastly in importance in one direction in man's estimate and expands in another. The future life becomes the goal of his endeavor with this present existence as the period of preparation for it. But only the good in this life will be happy in that other life. Even a "naive" savage may be trusted to make the evident deduction. It needs scarcely to be added that the argument is not in the least impaired by the admitted fact that the "good" life of the savage is far from what the culture peoples understand by that word. But even a savage may lead a life that is "good" relative to his surroundings.²

But is this all that the hope of immortality can do for the race, to act as a kind of police power for its moral restraint? There is a further and more important advantage connected with it, which grows directly out of the one just mentioned. Man's conception of heaven is always as something higher, better, happier than his present; that is to say, is always an idealized existence. It is an affirmation of an ideal of goodness and happiness, the latter, perhaps, predominating, even in the higher religions. Then, in so far

¹ De La Soussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, p. 238.

² Cf. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, II. 4.

as he seeks to be worthy of that ideal, he reproduces it more or less in his life and even in his surroundings. In China, for example, heaven "was identified with the principle of order, and measure, and just custom, and became the pattern of right for those upon the earth."¹ And we are here at the psychological spring not only of all moral progress in the past but of the possibility of moral improvement in the future. Because man never quite realizes his ideals the goal of endeavor remains constantly before him, is always in process of enlargement. Granted that man first painted his heaven with the colors which he saw around him in life, afterwards he just as certainly sought to color his life below with the tints of the glorified heaven above. During the cave-life of the Reindeer age the bones of the dead were sometimes painted red. A similar custom prevails among some savages to-day.² The explanation is that, having conceived the color of spirits to be red, the savage sought, by painting the bones of his dead, to make them conform to the spirit world.

As in the past, so to-day, so always, man will be incapable of his best endeavors unless, in spite of the grim certainty of physical death, he can project his individuality forward, unless he can think of himself, and believe himself, to be a personality which will consciously continue to exist and act indefinitely into the future, it matters not what particular form that future may assume. In other words, for his fullest development man must be convinced that there is a reality—a heaven—which corresponds to the sensations aroused in him by his religious beliefs. As over against the sordid materialism which can only grovel, or an insane pessimism which can only think in negatives, it is characteristic of the religious spirit to posit a moral meaning for the universe, the persistence of moral developments. And this carries with it, as a necessary corollary,³ the conviction that an individual who can "think

¹ Galloway, *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 133.

² Goblet D'Alviella, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1891, p. 18.

³ See per contra, Wundt, *Human and Animal Psychology*, p. 440.

god's thoughts after him," and feel the universal pain to-day, will not, cannot miserably cease to be whenever his house of clay shall chance to crumble into dust. And so long as men shall continue to live from such a universal point of view it will be impossible for them to live, with an easy conscience, at the beck and call of every natural lure, indifferently applying their energies to the achievement of any momentary inclination, good or bad. If, correlated to man's final ideal of worth—heaven—the universe has a moral meaning, then, and only then, has he something to strive for, duties can be rationally opposed to inclinations, the pleasant is not necessarily the good. Without such an ideal the whole moral content of life would lose its significance. The hypothesis that moral development must or may come to an end inevitably invalidates, both in theory and practice, any possible sanction to do or leave undone; the moral purposiveness in human action would be gone. Heaven is therefore an ethical necessity which defines a rational end toward which all human activities may be worthily directed, not only as the time and place of objective reward, but as the adequate subjective consummation of hopes and fears—the ideal completion of existence.

Why, then, do not normal men steal? Honesty is not a human instinct. True, by immemorial precept and example, by hoary inhibitions and restraint, we are now early taught the great distinction between the meum and the tuum. But that mechanical compulsion does not explain why the vast majority of intelligent men will not steal, even when convinced that it would be to their obvious material advantage so to do. Why do not more men commit adultery, even when they could do so with impunity in secret, gratifying passion but escaping the social odium due to such a course of conduct? It cannot be maintained that men are honest and pure because they recognize that thus and thus alone they are in harmony with certain so-called great collective cosmic ends. The individual's desires and passions care nothing for these cosmic ends. As a matter of fact, men are as unconscious of such

ends as a babe when it seeks its mother's breasts. Neither the immediate nor remote future well-being of society makes much of an appeal to man's intelligence when sense gratification is immediately at issue. Then why not be a thief or debauchee? The answer is plain. Men do not do wrong simply because it is wrong. That is to say, they recognize a moral meaning in life, they postulate a universe controlled by laws spiritual as well as physical, they formulate and are guided by judgments of worth. For them the good is the ought to be of things, the bad is the ought not to be of things. Sooner or later the bad will necessarily spell failure, the good will mean success; an imminent principle favors the good, and that because things are directed and controlled by God. Such the simple logic of the ordinary mind, the pedestal of reason upon which religion rests as a sufficient sanction for right conduct. True, all this may be but the passionate affirmation of a universal desire. Then, whence that desire? Why does humanity seem determined to put the imperishability of the individual beyond all doubt? The answer is that the human mind and such belief seem to have been made for each other. The whole system of things in which the race finds itself demands such a conviction. Of course, if materialism is right, if the immortality of the human soul means no more than the imperishability of the material atom, then is Kidd justified in his argument, and religion, beyond the possibility of reenforcement by reason, is an ultra-rational, if not irrational sanction for what seems to be, judged by immemorial results, completely rational conduct.

Again, without at all approving the doctrine of total depravity as it is usually understood, or rather misunderstood, it may be truthfully said that human nature as we know it can as ill afford to dispense with any efficient motive to right living as it can deny itself the stimulus of any great hope. Life, in so far as it is rational, is always the consequence of belief. Inevitably, if a man believes that life is limited to the brief span between the cradle and the grave, and that, therefore, this present is the

sole sphere of recompense for good and evil, if recompense there be, then, whenever virtue fails to result in good, immediate or future, the only possible motive for it is at once superseded and perseverance in it becomes nothing short of folly. Historically it is impossible to maintain that any large number of men for any length of time were ever so enamoured of virtue that they practiced it for its own sake alone. He is a poor judge of human nature who asserts that men need no further motive to virtue than virtue itself. Selfishness and passion even now, after untold generations of social discipline, continue to beat against the barriers of society and threaten to sweep them away. On what principle then do large numbers of men prefer virtue to vice? The answer is plain, the belief in a retributive immortality binds them to this preference. The carping critic will doubtless be ready to say, as has been often said, that such a sanction for conduct is, at best, a low one, purely hedonistic. But with the casuistry of the case we have here nothing to do. Our argument just now is this: whatever weakens belief in a future world by so much contracts the possibility of those manifestations of human agency which, with one accord, we recognize and esteem as worthy and which, in exceptional instances, rise into the region of the sublime and elicit universal praise. Blot out man's belief in a retributory immortality and you seriously narrow the sphere of his activity and sensibly diminish the grandeur of his life. Sacrifice, of interests and prospects, even of life itself, conduct which has made forever illustrious the memory of patriots and reformers, confessors and martyrs, would no longer find a sanction sufficient for its exercise. "He who loses his life shall find it," is foolishness according to all standards lower than the religious one. And even with religious faith to teach and strengthen men, the saints and martyrs are still few. Not yet has the mere theoretic fusion of personal ends with the great collective human aims produced its long succession of heroes. Not yet has science, even in this its so-called golden age, supplied the world with a single inspiration

or a solitary noble hope, upon the moral side. Spencer's autobiography closes with the pathetic wish that his own unfulfilled yearning for a solution of the mystery of existence could have been satisfied.¹ On the contrary, men are more insistent than ever with their social complaints, the air is vocal with the cries of human disappointment. Not yet have the endeavors of mankind been stimulated toward any useful end by the practical denial of God and the conviction that this life ends all. But, given an ideal propulsion like that supplied by the belief in immortality, and there is no discipline, no sorrow, no loss so great but that an ample recompense for it may be had in the eternal reaches of futurity. Not that the race would immediately lose its virtue if deprived of its belief in immortality. Dutifulness would doubtless still be seen, but certainly without the large horizon which religion lends it. Virtue would still exist, but the fine flavor of it would be gone. The ideal would be absent, and that, if once lost, would be irreplaceable. Not to multiply words, my meaning can perhaps be made clear by an illustration. When, in the hospitals of Paris, "the Sisters of Mercy yielded their places to secular nurses, the duty done was the same, yet not the same; it missed the special charm of devotion, of piety. What, then, was the secret of this charm? It is told that the Sisters whose task is hardest and most painful, such as they who spend their lives in ministering to the fallen abandoned women in the great cities, sometimes feel their hearts sinking within them at the contact with so great and terrible impurity; then they retire into the little chapel set apart for them and pray awhile before the altar, and when their prayer is finished, they are strengthened again for their ministry."²

"It was even so with the Master himself, who continued all night in prayer to God."

¹ Autobiography, II. 547.

² Welldon, *The Hope of Immortality*, p. 138.

Interesting illustration and corroboration of all this is found in those two peculiar books, Varieties of Religious Experience, by Professor James, and The Psychology of Religion, by Professor Starbuck. Let not the reader imagine, however, that we are inclined to set overmuch store by such laboratory interpretations of religion as these two works attempt. The method is too much that of the pathologist. The noticeable thing from our standpoint is the matter-of-fact way in which these two professors, the one at Harvard University, and the other at Leland Stanford University, accept and discuss, with the nomenclature of the laboratory, the everyday phenomena of Christian experience as something real, as accurate psychological facts, and do so even to the point of credulity.

What did Professor Starbuck's researches reveal on the precise point before us? What about the motives and purposes of the religious life to-day? Hear him: "It is a fact of considerable significance that almost never is a distinctly ego-centric impulse mentioned as a religious motive" by those replying to his 'questionnaire.' On the contrary, the precise counterpart of such impulses are much in evidence, showing that the subjects have felt and acquiesce in "the necessity of lopping off and plucking out exaggerated and harmful tendencies of self-activity which make the highest personal or social perfection impossible. The person has gained the power of standing outside his life and judging it; and of feeling within himself the strong, racial impulses that are likely to rupture the unity of his own being." And Professor Starbuck classifies three resulting groups of ideals, either as "they take shape in some form of helpfulness to others," or in the "more abstract and spiritualized form" of "the love and service of God," or as "the desire for oneness with God." "From childhood to maturity the trend of life has been persistently away from the self-assertive, ego-centric instincts towards those which are society centered and God centered." It "seems to be one of the great streams of religious development,

to give those deeper racial instincts which are consistent with self-development and the development of society the fullest possible expression, and gradually to transform and enlarge them into spiritual forces." In other words, religion functions among a culture people like ourselves just as it does among the nature peoples. It shifts the individual's attention from self to society and in so doing makes him a better citizen.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

If the position which we have taken has been sustained; if religion supplies, as we have shown, the real bases for social progress, it results that its opposite, non-religion, irreligion, pessimism, is the very solvent of society, the negation of all progress. ✓

Let us test this conclusion by the results obtained by pessimism when organized into a system of thought and conduct, as was done by Schopenhauer, but more especially by his far more philosophic and scientific disciple, Von Hartman, the great modern protagonist of the gospel of despair.

Pessimism's fundamental proposition is that this world is bad, very bad. Instead of the product of an eternally active imminent reason, such as pantheism usually postulates, pessimism regards the world as the result of an imminent unreason. Instead of harmony and goodness, there is only conflict and evil. Men, however, seem to think otherwise. Human life is, therefore, only a long succession of illusions, against which educational progress and the increase of culture have been able to achieve but meagre results. And yet, slowly but surely, the shams that delude the race are unmasked and deprived of their power. Once, for example, mankind, in its age of childlike paganism, dreamt of a possible present world brimful of happiness. The historic answer to this anticipation, however, was "Deep weariness and sated lust," with life a veritable hell, during Rome's decadence. Then came the second great illusion imposed on men, this time by the Christian religion, with its anticipations of a transcendent life after death, where happiness, impossible here, will be enjoyed complete.

But this anticipation also rests upon an illusion which is already vanishing into thin air. Already many, philosophers and scientists, for example, have emerged from it, though the greater part of mankind is still in bondage to it. But even many philosophers and scientists, deeming themselves wise, are still living in a fool's paradise. Contrary to their labored demonstrations, happiness is not at all to be had, neither now, nor at any future time, on earth or yet in a heaven above. There is no such thing as positive happiness, but at best only painlessness for mankind. What, then, is the tremendous conclusion? That it is folly to strive for the unattainable. Men ought rather to long for and welcome blank annihilation. The liberty to commit suicide is man's greatest blessing.

Of course, neither individual nor social life can have an absolute value in such a creed. A negation can never be an inspiration. Annihilation is not in any sense an ideal. By recognizing this, Schopenhauer proved himself a far more consistent thinker than his disciple. The former, logically, prescribed an individual denial of the will to live, while Hartmann, who intended his system for life and action, reaches the conclusion, upon his premises a veritable *reductio ad absurdum*, that man's highest duty is to will to live in order to assist as long as possible in the sublime task of teaching men the pitiful futility of living! And Hartmann really seems to think that this is an adequate basis for rational endeavor and hope. The purest Eudaimonism, with its little empirically acquired knowledge that individual pain may be lessened by voluntary effort, is much to be preferred to such an impotent and hopeless freak of fancy. It is not surprising that men imbued with such a belief should look upon morality as a jest and go their several egotic ways, unmindful altogether of their responsibilities as social integers.

It is, perhaps, worth noting that this modern *soi-disant* philosophic and scientific pessimism followed close upon the heels of the widespread religious scepticism of the eighteenth century.

It is equally worthy of note that the eighteenth century in Europe witnessed the most farreaching and alarming collapse of social institutions of modern times. The prime condition of social good is, it would seem, the practical belief that good really exists. And such a belief is logically and historically dependent upon man's belief in God.

And what is true of man en masse is true also of man individually. The godless man is, almost inevitably, the hopeless man. And it is only a step from hopelessness to despair and recklessness. The most dangerous man to-day, socially, is the religionless man, because he is the rudderless man, a derelict upon life's sea. No sufficient sanction can bind him to the performance of a course of duty, more especially when it is against his seeming interest or strong desire. Here and there, indeed, some educated and superior soul may seemingly no longer require the support of religious belief to establish and maintain the true balance of life's relations, but the popular need for it is as great as it ever was. And when we consider the tremendous disintegrating forces, such as perverted sex and acquisitive instincts, that still radiate from millions of personal centers after untold milléniums of socio-religious discipline the conviction is thrust upon us that this need will abide.

Only a few words need, therefore, be added concerning the future of religion. Kidd's position is indubitably the true one when he so stoutly maintains, the rationalistic school to the contrary notwithstanding, that, looking at the totality of modern civilization, there is no tendency whatever visible that religion is about to be superseded. On the contrary, his conclusion, reached, as he assures us, along the lines of Darwinian science, is that "the evolution which is slowly proceeding in human society is not primarily intellectual but religious in character," and that "through the operation of the law of natural selection the race must grow ever more and more religious." And in this conclusion he finds himself in unexpected company. Even Spencer is constrained to

admit that though religion, in the future as in the past, will be subject to change, it will never die. It may be expected that particular systems of religion, having spent themselves upon the social problems of their day, will diminish and disappear, but religion itself will never lose its force. It is as enduring as humanity itself. Indeed, functioning as a force that is both restrictive and propulsive, restrictive of what is bad in human nature and propulsive of what is good, the result must be, necessarily, the ever increasing elimination of irreligious individuals and groups and the gradual but steady evolution of a distinctly religious type of man. To argue the contrary is almost equivalent to saying that mankind must go from good to bad, and from bad to worse.

But, it may be asked, what of the rapid increase of secularism as manifested by the steady appropriation by the state of certain important social functions heretofore exercised by the church alone, such as education? The ever increasing secularization of education, both in this country and Europe, cannot be denied. In the higher branches it is practically complete the world over. This, and the evidently increasing sentiment which is strongly disinclined to be bound by the religious sanctions for such institutions as marriage and "the Lord's Day," are indications that seem to point in a direction opposite to that reached in what has gone before. And religious leaders, especially clergymen, look upon such tendencies with alarm. But their fears are groundless. Conventional churches will, doubtless, be greatly modified. Perhaps they will be supplanted by something wholly different and better fitted to express the religious sentiment of the future. But real religion itself will never die. A state of society in which the supernatural has not been "sensed;" in which, more or less waveringly but nevertheless, a future life was not anticipated; in which prayer was not offered to some deity; has never yet been known to exist. And, as shown in a previous chapter, the very men in whom the modern secular spirit had its springs, and others who have sought most sedulously to foster it, were never themselves able to get

quite away from the religious attitude. Nor is it possible to foresee a time when religion, a reverential attitude toward God, the sense of living forward into another world, will no longer be a force in human society. Hitherto the religious element has been preeminently its saving salt. It cannot be said that thus far, during the temporary and partial subversion of that element by the prevalence of the modern plague of "knowledge," the new "forces" awakened by the historical and scientific spirit have supplied any evidence of ability either to conserve what has been achieved or to elevate individual and social character to still higher altitudes, to carry the world to something better than it has attained to under the tutelage of the religious spirit. Science has promulgated its protest against an artificial theology of the past, and it may be conceded that it has made good its protest. But, on the other hand, what great dynamic truth has it declared in the realm of character, like that, for example, of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God? Is it too much to claim that it was under the inspiration, even if not at the immediate suggestion of this religious doctrine that every great moral and social reform has been carried to a successful issue in the Western world? It would, of course, be rash to say that science has said its last word. Nevertheless, looking back upon the past, and considering what the world would lose with the passing of the religious spirit, it is impossible to look forward very sanguinely to a future under the sway of the scientific spirit alone. The material conveniences and comforts of existence would doubtless continue to improve. But it may also be expected that life itself would become sadder and grayer even than it has been. That there would be less energy and capacity for reform is certain, since men would be deprived of those profounder convictions and deeper enthusiasms which the fervid religious faith of the past alone supplied.

And already there are indications that the great materialistic drift of the past century has run its course. The signs are becoming more abundant that the social mind is awakening to the fatal

futility of the position which has been reached. The profoundly materialistic conception of the nineteenth century on the scientific side, with its inevitable corollary, unuttered, perhaps, but lurking everywhere in men's minds, and secretly controlling them, of "neither justice, nor virtue, nor morality" in connection with "business," but only "utility," and issuing in a gigantic, conscienceless competition for gain, not only by individuals and small groups, but by entire nations—of which the end is not yet, as witness the bitter and bloody and momentous war between Japan and Russia—that conception is being scrutinized, criticized, attacked, along the whole line of its once seemingly impregnable intrenchments. Men have paused to recall that a type of society in which selfishness is the controlling principle has never yet endured, and it requires no prophet's vision to assure them that it never will. And the only true solvent for selfishness is religion. If the moral gangrene of indifference to the other fellow's welfare, now so alarmingly prevalent in this country, is ever to be checked, it must be done through the application to life of the religion which bids us love our neighbor as ourselves.

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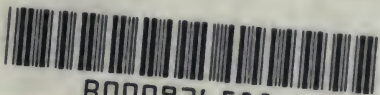
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